

Who Get's Experimental Ebola Drug?

WASHINGTON (AP) — The use of an experimental drug to treat two Americans diagnosed with Ebola is raising ethical questions about who gets first access to unproven new therapies for the deadly disease. But some health experts fear debate over extremely limited doses will distract from tried-and-true measures to curb the growing outbreak — things like more rapidly identifying and isolating the sick.

The World Health Organization is convening a meeting of medical ethicists next week to examine what it calls "the responsible thing to do" about whatever supplies eventually may become available of a medicine that's never been tested in people.

At least one country involved in the outbreak is interested in the drug. Nigeria's health minister, Onyenbuchi Chukwu, said at a news conference that he had asked the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about access. CDC Director Tom Frieden "conveyed there are virtually no doses available" but basic supportive care can work, a CDC spokesman said Wednesday.

There is no proven treatment or vaccine for Ebola, which so far has infected more than 1,700 people and killed more than 930 in West Africa in what has become the worst outbreak of this viral hemorrhagic fever.

"How many times have we found magic therapies that ended up ... doing more harm than good?" cautioned University of Minnesota professor Michael Osterholm, who advises the U.S. government on infectious disease threats.

Hamas Enters Talks With Israel On Gaza

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Hamas has entered Egyptian-brokered talks with Israel on a new border regime for blockaded Gaza from a point of military weakness: it lost hundreds of fighters, two-thirds of its 10,000 rockets and all of its attack tunnels, worth \$100 million, Israel says.

The Gaza war has boosted the Islamic militant group's popularity among Palestinians because it confronted Israel. But the mood can quickly turn if Hamas fails to deliver achievements for Gaza in the Cairo talks, most urgently the opening the territory's borders.

If the Cairo talks fail, Hamas will have only limited options, since resuming rocket fire would probably bring more ruination on an already-devastated territory. In the past month of Israel-Hamas fighting — the third major round of such hostilities in five years — nearly 1,900 Palestinians have been killed, more than 9,000 wounded and thousands of homes destroyed.

The massive destruction in Gaza City's neighborhood of Shijaiyah, close to the border with Israel, illustrated the extent of Hamas' military setbacks and the fickle public mood it faces.

Entire city blocks have been laid to waste in Shijaiyah in one of the fiercest battles of the war that pitted hundreds of Hamas gunmen against Israeli troops after the start of the Israeli ground operation July 17.

Federal Court Weighs Gay Marriage Cases

CINCINNATI (AP) — A federal appeals court judge hearing arguments in six gay marriage fights in a landmark hearing Wednesday expressed deep skepticism about whether the courts are the ideal setting for such major change, saying that the best way to win the hearts and minds of Americans on the issue would be the democratic process.

The judge, Jeffrey S. Sutton of the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, peppered attorneys with the question and said it was strange that the same-sex couples fighting statewide bans weren't showing more patience.

"I would have thought the best way to get respect and dignity is through the democratic process," Sutton said. "Nothing happens as quickly as we'd like it. ... I'm not 100 percent sure it's the better route for the gay rights community."

Sutton and two other judges from the 6th Circuit heard arguments in six cases from Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan and Tennessee in the biggest such session on the issue so far. The cases pit states' rights and traditional, conservative values against what plaintiffs' attorneys say is a fundamental right to marry under the U.S. Constitution.

If the 6th Circuit decides against gay marriage, that would create a divide among federal appeals courts and put pressure on the U.S. Supreme Court to settle the issue for good in its 2015 session. The appeals panel did not indicate when it would rule.

US General's Killer Hid In Bathroom

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The Afghan soldier who killed a U.S. two-star general and wounded 15 other people hid in a bathroom with a NATO assault rifle then opened fire when a group of officers from international forces passed by, an Afghan military official said Wednesday.

As U.S. and Afghan officials investigated the attack Tuesday that killed Maj. Gen. Harold J. Greene, the highest-ranked U.S. officer to be slain in combat since 1970 in the Vietnam War, authorities reported two other so-called "insider" attacks the same day.

In the deadliest of the attacks, an Afghan police officer killed seven of his colleagues at a checkpoint, then stole their weapons and fled in a police car late Tuesday in the Uruzgan provincial capital of Tirin Kot, provincial spokesman Doost Mohammad Nayab said.

A doctor at a local hospital told the AP it appeared the police officer drugged his colleagues before the shooting. The doctor spoke on condition of anonymity as he wasn't authorized to release the information. Nayab later denied that the police officers had been drugged and said the officer involved had Taliban connections, without elaborating.

In Paktia province, an Afghan police guard exchanged fire with NATO troops near the governor's office, provincial police said. The guard was killed in the gunfight.

Science Fiction Becomes Reality

DARMSTADT, Germany (AP) — Turning what seemed like a science fiction tale into reality, an unmanned probe swung alongside a comet on Wednesday after a 4-billion-mile (6.4-billion kilometer) chase through outer space over the course of a decade.

Europe's Rosetta probe will orbit and study the giant lump of dust and ice as it hurtles toward the sun and, if all goes according to plan, drop a lander onto the comet in the coming months.

Rosetta turned up as planned for its rendezvous with comet 67P (Churyumov-Gerasimenko) somewhere between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter.

The incredible trip, launched on March 2, 2004, marks a milestone in mankind's effort to understand the mysterious "shooting stars" that periodically flash past Earth, and which have often been viewed with fear and trepidation.

While the moon, Mars and even asteroids have been visited, no spacecraft has yet gotten so close to a comet. Having achieved this feat, Rosetta will go one step further and drop a lander on 67P's icy surface — a maneuver planned for November.

Walgreen Declines Overseas Tax Relief

Growing political heat and possible customer backlash helped dissuade Walgreen from trying to trim its tax bill by reorganizing overseas as part of an acquisition.

But experts say they don't expect other companies considering the move to follow Walgreen's lead and stay rooted in the United States.

Walgreen, the nation's biggest drugstore chain, said Wednesday that it would no longer consider a so-called inversion, which has become popular among large, multi-national health care companies looking to cut U.S. taxes. The company said it will instead combine with the Swiss health and beauty retailer Alliance Boots to form a holding company that's based in the U.S.

Walgreen Co. said in a statement that it was "mindful of the ongoing public reaction to a potential inversion" and its "unique role as an iconic American" retailer.

Nigeria Rushes To Get Isolation Tents For Ebola

BY MARAM MAZAN AND KRISTA LARSON
Associated Press

LAGOS, Nigeria — Nigerian authorities rushed to obtain isolation tents Wednesday in anticipation of more Ebola infections as they disclosed five more cases of the virus and a death in Africa's most populous nation, where officials were racing to keep the gruesome disease confined to a small group of patients.

The five new Nigerian cases were all in Lagos, a megacity of 21 million people in a country already beset with poor health care infrastructure and widespread corruption, and all five were reported to have had direct contact with one infected man.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization began a meeting to decide whether the crisis, the worst recorded outbreak of its kind, amounts to an international public health emergency. At least 932 deaths in four countries have been blamed on the illness, with 1,711 reported cases.

In recent years, the WHO has declared an emergency only twice, for swine flu in 2009 and polio in May. The declaration would probably come with recommendations on travel and trade re-

strictions and wider Ebola screening. It also would be an acknowledgment that the situation is critical and could worsen without a fast global response.

The group did not immediately confirm the new cases reported in Nigeria. And Nigerian authorities did not release any details on the latest infections, except to say they all had come into direct contact with the sick man who arrived by plane in Lagos late last month.

With the death toll mounting in the region, Liberia's president announced a state of emergency late Wednesday and said it may result in the suspension of some citizens' rights. She lamented that fear and panic had kept many family members from sending sick relatives to isolation centers.

"Ignorance and poverty, as well as entrenched religious and cultural practices, continue to exacerbate the spread of the disease," President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said.

And in Sierra Leone, where enforcing quarantines of sick patients also has been met with resistance, some 750 soldiers deployed to the Ebola-ravaged east as part of "Operation Octopus."

Ebola, which causes some victims to bleed from the eyes, mouth and ears, can only be transmitted through direct

contact with the bodily fluids of someone who is sick — blood, semen, saliva, urine, feces or sweat.

Millions in Lagos live in cramped conditions without access to flushable toilets. Signs posted across the city warn people not to urinate in public.

Kenneth Akihomi, a 47-year-old worker installing fiber-optic cable, said he was carefully washing his hands to avoid infection. But he said most people were relying on faith to stay healthy.

"They're not panicking. They are godly people," he said. "They believe they can pray, and maybe very soon there will be cure."

The revelation of more infections also came amid a public-sector doctors' strike in Nigeria that began in early July. So far, health workers monitoring the latest Ebola patients are still on the job.

Nigeria is the fourth West African country to be hit by the Ebola outbreak since it first emerged in March in the remote tropical forests of Guinea. The disease then spread to neighboring Sierra Leone and Liberia before reaching Nigeria, where it surfaced shortly before the government drew criticism for its response to the abduction of more than 200 schoolgirls by Islamic militants back in April. The girls are still missing.

Obama Urges Enduring Cease-Fire For Gaza Strip

BY LARA JAKES
AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON — An enduring stability between Israel and Palestinians is not in the near future, and will require leaders on both sides of the generations-long dispute to take political risks for the sake of peace and prosperity, President Barack Obama said Wednesday.

But first, Obama said, a temporary cease-fire in place in the Gaza Strip must hold without being violated before it expires on Friday.

Wrapping up a day of meeting with African leaders, Obama responded to a reporter's questions about ongoing negotiations in Cairo over how to maintain the tentative truce between Israel and the militant group Hamas that controls the Gaza Strip.

The president said Israel deserves to defend itself from a barrage of rockets from Gaza, and terror tun-

nels that Hamas has dug into Israel. At the same time, however, he said the Palestinian people in Gaza need to have some confidence that they will be able to rebuild their communities, pursue prosperity and not feel walled off from the rest of the world.

To achieve both goals, "there are formulas available, but they are going to require risks on the part of political leaders, they will require a slow rebuilding of trust, which is obviously very difficult in the aftermath of the kind of violence that we have seen," Obama told journalists. "So I don't think we get there right away."

He twice repeated that "I have no sympathy for Hamas," which both the U.S. and Israel consider a terrorist organization.

Nearly 1,900 Palestinians have been killed in the latest outbreak of fighting between Israel and Hamas that began

July 8. Sixty-four Israeli soldiers and three civilians inside Israel have also been killed.

Obama also said he has "great sympathy" for the Palestinian Authority, which is based in the West Bank city of Ramallah and is led by President Mahmoud Abbas, who over the last year participated in what was an ultimately failed push for enduring peace with Israel.

Obama called Abbas "sincere in his desire for peace," but said the Palestinian Authority appears to have been weakened by the violence and failure for a long-term resolution with Israel. He said the Palestinian Authority has shown itself to be responsible, and has recognized the state of Israel, as part of its desire for a solution that would also give international recognition to a state of Palestine.

"The population in the West Bank may also have

lost confidence or hope on how to move forward," Obama said. "We have to rebuild on that as well."

The peace process fell apart last April after nearly nine months of negotiations, in part after Abbas and Hamas agreed to build a new government together and give the Palestinian people a unified leadership for the first time in years. Israel angrily shelved the negotiations, saying it would not deal with a government that included Hamas.

Negotiators from Israel were meeting with a Palestinian delegation in Cairo for talks on extending the temporary cease-fire and trying to resolve underlying issues to broker a more lasting truce. Officials from the U.S., the United Nations and Mideast nations were helping foster the discussions, which began with both sides taking hard-line positions and much jockeying expected ahead.

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