

Nurse in Texas becomes the first person to catch Ebola in U.S.

By Dallas Morning News, adapted by Newsela staff

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Tom Frieden speaks at a news conference, Sunday Oct. 12, 2014, in Atlanta, Georgia. Top federal health officials said Sunday that the Ebola diagnosis of a health care worker who treated Thomas Eric Duncan at a Texas hospital indicates a breach in safety protocol.

DALLAS—A Texas nurse is sick with Ebola. She is the first person to catch the deadly disease in the United States.

The nurse caught Ebola from a man she had helped take care of. The man, Thomas Eric Duncan, died of Ebola last Wednesday. He brought the disease with him from Africa when he came to visit family members in Dallas.

The nurse discovered she had a fever Friday night. She drove herself to the emergency room of Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas. Ninety minutes later, she was placed in a special area. The area keeps her completely separate from other people so Ebola does not spread.

Not Sure How She Got It

Dr. Tom Frieden runs the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It is a government health agency. Frieden said there are rules for anyone taking care of an Ebola patient. The nurse

caught Ebola because the rules weren't followed, he said. The rules say health care workers must wear special clothes that keep them covered head to toe. The clothing includes gloves, masks and shoe covers.

Frieden said CDC officials have spoken with the nurse. She did not know how she may have caught Ebola.

Frieden said a person can get Ebola from even a single mistake. He said it is possible that other health care workers may get Ebola.

Texas Health Commissioner David Lakey said the nurse came into contact with Duncan many times.

Spreads Through Direct Contact

Ebola is hard to get. You can't catch it just by being in the same room as a person with the disease. Ebola is spread through direct contact with the blood or body fluids of a sick person. A person with Ebola can only spread the disease once he or she is feeling sick. Signs of Ebola include fever, headaches and stomach pain. There is no cure yet.

Officials think the nurse came very near only one person since she began feeling sick.

Lakey said that health officials have been preparing for something like this.

Daniel Varga is with Presbyterian Hospital. He said the nurse caught Ebola during Duncan's second visit to the hospital. The first time Duncan went to Presbyterian's emergency room was Sept. 26. He returned to the hospital two days later, on Sept. 28. Duncan is the only person to die of Ebola in the U.S. He died Oct. 8.

Team Cleans Nurse's Apartment

The nurse's apartment was completely cleaned on Sunday. A team also cleaned the nurse's car and some areas of her apartment building.

Lindsey Carpenter works in a nearby hospital. She said she hopes Presbyterian Hospital figures out how the nurse got Ebola.

"I wonder how she got it," Carpenter said. "It's really puzzling. There's probably more to the story that we don't know."