

allafrica.com

Liberia Records First COVID-19 Related Death

By William Q. Harmon

7-9 minutes

-- Total number of confirmed cases now surge to ten

Liberia has recorded its first coronavirus related death, the government, through the Ministry of Health has announced. The victim, John Teah, a 72-year old male who was admitted at the isolation ward of the Eternal Love Winning Africa (ELWA) hospital in Paynesville, died early Saturday morning after testing positive of the virus late Friday evening, Minister of Health, Dr. Wilhelmina Jallah told state radio on Saturday.

Health authorities say that the virus is now gradually having a hold on the nation and is calling for total vigilance among the population.

The rapid spread of the deadly Coronavirus disease also known as COVID-19, is now taking hold in the country as the government had announced an additional three confirmed cases, now taking the total number of confirmed cases in the country to ten, including the sole recorded death.

"I want to announce that we have an additional three confirmed coronavirus cases. Yesterday we were at seven and this morning

we are at ten," Minister Jallah disclosed.

Two of the three newest cases are laboratory technicians, who are believed to have contracted the virus while testing blood samples at the medical facilities with which they work. One is Doris Teah, a 41-year old female, who works as a lab technician at Edinburg Clinic, and David Zinnah, 42, who works with ASPEN Clinic. The names of the patients were disclosed by Information Minister, Eugene Nagbe.

She said that two out of the three additional cases are related to case #6. "Two of the new cases are technicians." She noted that vigorous contacts tracing exercises have already started for the latest cases.

She urged those running labs at various hospitals and clinics around the country to be very careful as they do not know the statuses of the people they are encountering.

"Two of the new patients are lab technicians who were tested and they came out positive. The third individual is a 72-year old male. He was on the ELWA Hospital isolation ward. He died this morning after his testing on Friday night, which was confirmed positive," said Minister Jallah.

"We are tracing all of the contacts of these cases. These patients were all contacts of other cases. So if you are contacts of any of these cases, we are urging you to come forward so that you can be tested at our SKD facility. You can also call and tell us that you are a contact and we will reach to you," she said.

The Minister, however, expressed frustration that healthcare workers are not given a good reception when they go after cases in the communities. "We will now start tracing people in the

communities. But it is sad that people are dodging you when you get into the communities to trace suspected cases and contacts. Some are taking their relatives and running away with them."

"We need to do your test and find out whether you have been exposed and to whom were you exposed. It is just contact tracing to put everyone in perspective," she noted.

Dr. Jallah said that the increase in cases does not mean that the outbreak is overwhelming the health system of the country, but there is a need to employ vigilance and continue to follow all preventive measures put in place by the government to combat the virus.

The Minister said though there is no cure for COVID-19 as of now, it is good to report suspected cases very early in order to start early treatments. The Minister called on the public to stop speculating the situation as it creates panic within the citizenry.

6th and 7th cases of the Outbreak

Reports on Friday indicated that Assistant Public Works Minister for Planning and Programming, James Reynolds, was confirmed as the 6th positive of the for the coronavirus in the country.

According to the report, which was later authenticated by health authorities, Minister Reynolds might have contracted the virus while on official duty in Stockholm, Sweden, for the Third Global Ministerial Conference in February.

It is said that he traveled with other officials of government including the Inspector General of Police, Col. Patrick Sudue, the Minister of Transport Samuel Wlue, Tarnue Jarboi and Ms. Winifred Cole of the Ministry of Public Works.

At the regular MICAT update on the outbreak on Friday, Information Minister Eugene Nagbe said the 7th case, a male, is the first non-Liberian to be tested positive of the Virus on Liberian soil.

This revelation by the Information Minister came barely 24 hours after the health authorities announced additional three cases to the three the country had for over two weeks--taking the total confirmed cases at that time to six.

Speaking further, the Information Minister said the seventh patient, an Indian national, Ruji Dua, voluntarily reported himself to the Samuel Kayon Doe sports complex where the government established a public testing laboratory.

Mr. Dua is the Country Director of Population Services International (PSI), and it remains unclear how he contracted the virus as he, according to the MICAT boss, has not traveled out of the country since December 2019 but is reported to have interacted with SWISS delegation a month ago. "This case appears to be transmitted locally," the Minister said.

The 67-year-old has been taken in isolation by the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL).

Minister Nagbe said that the health authorities are still investigating how the PSI boss got infected.

The patient, who is reported to have provided details of his Itinerary to health authorities to enable contact tracing, is currently receiving treatment at the 14th military hospital, Minister Nagbe said.

Three Recovered Cases





Sign up for free AllAfrica Newsletters

Get the latest in African news delivered straight to your inbox

At long last, suspended Executive Director of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Dr. Nathaniel Blama, the index case, along with two others initially tested positive, were on Friday release from intensive care after two additional tests turnout negative of the virus.

They were removed from the 14 Military Hospital after they tested negative for COVID-19 for the second time.

Dr. Blama, Johnny Philips, and Lenda Russ, who are the first three who have now tested negative twice, are all in excellent health now and will be discharged soon.

They have, however, been taken to a secluded area for further observation before being allowed to go to their homes.

It can be recalled that the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Francis Ketteh told Journalists on Thursday, April 2, 2020, that the first three cases could be discharged by latest Friday if their second test results come up negative.

He explained that on Thursday health practitioners tested 63 persons of the virus, but only one was confirmed positive of the virus.

On the 16th of March 2020, President George Weah announced

that the suspended Director of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Nathaniel Blama was positive of the Coronavirus followed by two others including Johnny Phillips and Lenda Russ.

Mr. Blama was tested on the 16th of, March, Lenda Russ tested and confirmed positive on the 20th of March, while Johnny Philips was tested positive on the 17th of March.