

# Experimental vaccine for Ebola shows promise

By Maria Cheng ASSOCIATED PRESS • Saturday August 1, 2015



**LONDON** — *An experimental Ebola vaccine tested on thousands of people in Guinea seems to work and might help shut down the waning epidemic in western Africa, according to interim results from a study published on Friday.*

Currently, there is no licensed treatment or vaccine for Ebola, which has killed more than 11,000 people in western Africa since the world's biggest outbreak began in the forest region of Guinea last year. Cases have dropped dramatically in recent months in the other two hard-hit countries, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

“If proven effective, this is going to be a game-changer,” said Dr. Margaret Chan, director-general of the World Health Organization, which sponsored the study. Scientists have struggled for years to develop Ebola treatments and vaccines but have faced numerous hurdles, including the sporadic nature of outbreaks and funding shortages. Many attempts have failed.

The study involved several thousand people who had been near a new Ebola patient or a close contact of one. They were randomly assigned to get the vaccine right away or in three weeks.

Researchers started tracking results 10 days after they set up the groups to give time to weed out any people who might have been silently harboring the virus when the study began.

After that point, none of the people in the group that had been assigned to get the vaccine right away developed Ebola, versus 16 people in the group eligible to get the vaccine after 21 days.

The vaccine, developed by the Canadian government, since has been licensed to Merck & Co. but has not yet been approved by regulators. The study results were published online in the journal *Lancet*.

Officials think the vaccine only would be used once an outbreak starts, to protect those at high risk; there are no plans to introduce mass-vaccination campaigns or to create huge stockpiles of the shots. The vaccine uses an Ebola protein to prompt the body's immune system to attack the virus.

“It looks to be about as safe as a flu vaccine,” said Ben Neuman, a virologist at the University of Reading who was not part of the trial. Researchers are still assessing possible side effects; the most serious seemed to be fever and the stress experienced by patients who believe such symptoms were caused by Ebola.

(Source : [http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/national\\_world/2015/07/31/experimental-vaccine-for-ebola-shows-promise.html](http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/national_world/2015/07/31/experimental-vaccine-for-ebola-shows-promise.html))