

Liberia's fight with ebola not over yet, cause of resurgence still a mystery

Six cases of Ebola have surfaced in Liberia in the two months since the nation was declared free of the deadly virus, raising fears the disease lingers in the human body in ways not fully understood. The six new infections since June 21 include two deaths.

The strain that resurfaced in Liberia does not appear to be genetically similar to those in Sierra Leona and Guinea, suggesting the new infections are not the result of cross-border contamination. Instead, the strain in Liberia is similar to one that circulated in that country last year, according to the WHO. "Preliminary evidence from genomic sequencing strongly suggests that the most likely origin of transmission is a re-emergence of the virus from a survivor within Liberia," the WHO reported Wednesday.

Scientists such as Stuart Nichol, head of the Viral Special Pathogens Branch of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said one very possible explanation for the virus staying alive in survivors is that it possibly harbors in male testes. "Infectious agents can hang out there undetected by the body's policing system, looking for foreign invaders," Nichol said Wednesday. He said there have been cases of it remaining active there for 80 days.

There could be other explanations for the virus suddenly striking back in Liberia, said Peter Hotez, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. People may have carried the disease without showing symptoms, something documented in a smaller outbreak, Hotez said. Another possibility is a rare case where the incubation period lasted far longer than 21 days.

"I think this is a new type of epidemic that we haven't seen before," Hotez said. "We're still in a learning curve."

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Re-emergence of Ebola in Liberia remains a mystery](#)