

Beat: Health

New York doctor declared free of Ebola, making U.S. Ebola-free

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USPA News - An American doctor who tested positive for Ebola after returning home from West Africa has been declared free of the virus, New York health officials announced on Monday, making the United States effectively free of Ebola. There is no sign that anyone else was infected.

The New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) said Dr. Craig Spencer had been declared free of Ebola and was scheduled to be released from Bellevue Hospital on Tuesday. "After a rigorous course of treatment and testing, Dr. Spencer has been declared free of the virus," an emailed statement said. "Dr. Spencer poses no public health risk and will be discharged from the hospital tomorrow." Spencer had received required supportive therapy in addition to antiviral therapy and plasma therapy, which had previously been used in the successful treatment of Ebola patients at other U.S. hospitals. He is expected to make his first public statement at a Tuesday morning press conference. "I am delighted to hear that Dr. Spencer has made a full recovery and will be released from Bellevue Hospital," said New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. "I also want to thank New Yorkers for their calm and resolve over the last few weeks and thank Dr. Spencer and all of the volunteers with Doctors Without Borders for their selfless service to provide medical treatment abroad." Dr. Spencer arrived at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York on October 17 after flying from West Africa, where he had treated Ebola victims as part of a Doctors Without Borders team. He was hospitalized at Bellevue Hospital on October 23 when he reported a fever to health officials, after which he tested positive for Ebola. The Ebola case, in the most populous city in the United States, initially sparked fears of more cases after authorities confirmed Spencer had been out in public before falling ill. A number of people remain under active monitoring for Ebola symptoms as a precaution but there is no indication that any of them have contracted the virus. Monday's news makes the United States effectively free of Ebola, but it will take another 42 days before the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declares the United States Ebola-free. The current Ebola outbreak in West Africa is believed to have started in Guinea in December 2013 but was not detected until March, after which it spread to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. The outbreak features the Zaire strain of the Ebola virus, which is considered to be the most aggressive and deadly strain, having killed up to 9 out of 10 infected in previous outbreaks. As of November 7, at least 13,268 people have been infected with Ebola since the outbreak began, including 4,960 people who have died of the disease, according to health authorities in the countries involved. Liberia has been the worst hit country with at least 6,619 cases including 2,766 deaths, but authorities believe the actual figures are far higher. Ebola is a highly infectious disease and kills its victims in a very short time. Signs and symptoms include high grade fever, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, headache, measles-like rash, red eyes and, in some cases, bleeding from body openings. The ongoing outbreak is the worst ever of its kind and coincides with an unrelated Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The virus, for which there is no cure or vaccine, can spread through direct contact with body fluids such as saliva, blood, stool, vomit, urine and sweat but also through soiled linen used by an infected person. It can also spread by using skin piercing instruments previously used by an infected person or by touching the body of a person who died of Ebola. It is not airborne.

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