

## Spain officially free of Ebola (Update)

November 29 2014

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The World Health Organization on Tuesday declared Spain free of Ebola after going a month and a half with no new cases since an infected nurse successfully beat the disease.

Forty-two days—or two incubation periods—have passed since Spanish nurse Teresa Romero tested negative for the virus, it said.

"There have been no further cases since the healthcare worker was confirmed to be negative for Ebola virus, so today the outbreak is over in Spain," WHO said in a statement.

"On 21 October the healthcare worker tested negative for the second time and was consequently considered free of Ebola infection," it said.

Romero was the first person to catch the disease outside Africa in the current outbreak which has killed nearly 6,000 people, mainly in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

The 44-year-old was one of the nursing staff at Madrid's Carlos III hospital who volunteered to treat two elderly Spanish missionaries who caught the disease in Africa and died in August and September.

She showed the first symptoms of the disease on September 30 but was only hospitalised six days later, fuelling fears that she may have spread the virus to people who were in close contact with her during this period.

Doctors found no trace of Ebola in Romero on October 21 and she left hospital on November 5.

WHO on Tuesday hailed Spain's exhaustive efforts to track down and monitor everyone who had been in contact with the nurse, and to ensure that everyone caring for her used protective gear properly.

Spanish authorities had identified and monitored 87 people who had been in contact with Romero, and 15 of them were placed in quarantine.

A full 145 hospital employees who came into contact with the patient during her treatment had also been actively monitored for 21 days, and no one had developed the disease, WHO said.

Ebola, one of the deadliest viruses known to man, is spread only through direct contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person showing symptoms such as fever or vomiting.

People caring for the sick or handling the dead from Ebola are especially exposed.

Health workers have been among the worst hit, with 340 deaths out of 592 cases.

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