

WHO Confirms Low Risk in Cruise Outbreak



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The World Health Organization (WHO) said Tuesday that a hantavirus outbreak on a cruise ship near Cabo Verde likely began with passengers infected before boarding, and that the overall public health risk remains low.

WHO Director Maria Van Kerkhove said in Geneva that the first confirmed case and a close contact were likely infected off the vessel, based on incubation patterns.

Investigators are also assessing possible limited human-to-human transmission among close

contacts. So far, seven of 147 passengers and crew have fallen ill, including two confirmed and five suspected cases.

“Sadly, three have died,” she said. One patient is in intensive care in South Africa and is improving, while two others remain on board for evacuation to the Netherlands.

Passengers have been asked to remain in their cabins as precautionary measures and disinfection continue. No new symptomatic cases have been reported.

Hantaviruses are mainly transmitted by rodents, while human-to-human transmission is rare.

WHO said sequencing is underway, with the Andes virus among leading possibilities. No evidence of rodents has been found on the ship.

WHO is coordinating with health authorities in Cabo Verde, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, and the UK. Contact tracing and testing are ongoing.

The vessel MV Hondius, on a polar voyage from Argentina to Antarctica, is expected to proceed to the Canary Islands after evacuations for further investigation and disinfection.