

Ebola vaccine trials stop!

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Singapore: With the death toll hitting the 7500 mark, Ebola in West Africa has gripped the nations in a deadly epidemic. As per the WHO estimates the number of infected climbed to 20,000 and the only news that came as a relief to the millions of people was that of a prospective vaccine that might be available by early 2015. However, this too seems to be doubtful as the vaccine trials conducted in Switzerland were stopped with volunteers reporting side effects upon vaccine administration.

The University of Geneva hospital said that the trials were stopped a week early "as a measure of precaution." The vaccine being tested is one developed by NewLink, and recently bought by Merck. The authorities also said the trials were interrupted after some patients complained of joint pains in their hands and feet.

The representatives added that the shutdown was temporary and trials will be resumed from January. The report released from the University read: "The onset of joint pain after infection or vaccination is very common. This happens, for instance, in one out of five vaccinations against rubella. This is a well-documented phenomenon which does not worry specialists. However, it deserves to be carefully studied in order to update the information which is provided to the volunteers. The temporary interruption of a clinical trial is a standard precautionary measure in such cases."

The hospital said human safety trials would resume on 5 January in up to 15 volunteers after checks had taken place to ensure the joint pain symptoms were "benign and temporary".

Four trials of another Ebola vaccine developed by GlaxoSmithKline, in collaboration with the United States National Institute

of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, are also underway.