

Fear of Ebola leads to intensified hunt for cure

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Singapore: Infecting at least 1,700 people, the Ebola epidemic sweeping through the West African regions, has taken proportions of an international emergency. Many scientists across the globe are mushrooming a prevention or cure for the ghastly virus that kills more than 90 percent of the infected.

The Australian National University is one of a handful of the world's front-line laboratories working on a medical response for the Ebola virus. Australian Health Ministry has maintained that though the virus could enter the country through air travel, the nation's highly sophisticated medical infrastructure would see it contained.

Scientists at the University said that drugs and vaccines are being developed and trials could begin in the US on a vaccine, as early as next month. Even in face of a horrific epidemic like this, vaccines need to pass lengthy clinical trials to prove their safety.

Russian scientists too are conducting pre-clinical testing of a vaccine designed to prevent Ebola infection, the country's chief epidemiologist, Ms Anna Popova, told reporters.

She said that the pre-clinical testing of the vaccine had been accelerated considering the emergency situation in Africa. Though scientists feel that it would be more appropriate to test the new vaccine on the currently suffering African people, they have a fear of being seen to be using poor Africans as guinea pigs.