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The U.S. will begin human trials of an Ebola vaccine made by GlaxoSmithKline as the death toll from the disease rises in West Africa.

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"First Human Trials of Experimental Ebola Vaccine to Begin." Kate Snow, correspondent. NBC Nightly News

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LESTER HOLT, anchor:

As the Ebola outbreak continues to spread in West Africa, a sobering new prediction today. The World Health Organization said the epidemic could infect twenty thousand people and spread to ten more countries. And that gave more urgency to news today that human trials will now be accelerated on an experimental vaccine to prevent this deadly disease. Our report tonight from NBC's Kate Snow.

KATE SNOW reporting:

In Liberia, it's getting worse by the day; too few doctors and hospitals, too many patients.

LINDIS HURUM: The number is going up rapidly what-- faster than what we thought.

SNOW: Another worker with the aid group Doctors Without Borders wrote this week, the hardest part is not being able to hold and comfort a dying child while wearing so much protective gear. With more than fifteen hundred deaths, a new vaccine to prevent Ebola can't come soon enough.

DR. ANTHONY FAUCI (National Institutes of Health): Next week, we're going to be putting this vaccine for the first time in humans.

SNOW: Twenty healthy adult volunteers in Maryland will get an experimental vaccine made by GlaxoSmithKline. Researchers hope it will trigger immunity to Ebola. The vaccine will also be tested in Britain and the African nations of Mali and Gambia. It isn't likely to ever be part of a regular course of immunizations the way mumps and polio shots are, but Doctor Fauci says it could protect people in hot spots.

What's the hope?

DR. FAUCI: If, in fact it is a vaccine that's going to be safe and effective, you'd want to give it to the people in the area who are at risk but particularly those people who are the health care providers.

SNOW: Is this as fast as you can go because, as you know, people are dying every single day?

DR. FAUCI: Well, first of all, again, be careful this is not a treatment of a sick person. This is a prevention of infection. We still don't know if it works. Having said that, we're going extremely quickly.
SNOW: Human trials of other drugs are being expedited too, to fight an epidemic that at the moment seems unstoppable.
Kate Snow, NBC News, New York.