

Another concern

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The WHO disclosed that there are no specific treatments or vaccines against smallpox virus infection. Photo: El Correo.

By Guillermo Alvarado

The World Health Organization, WHO, issued an alert on a possible outbreak of the disease known as "Monkeypox", after several cases were detected in countries of different continents, most of them in Europe.

It is a disease endemic to West and Central Africa, so that the contagions recorded in a dozen countries, with 92 confirmed cases and dozens of people classified as suspects, are quite atypical.

According to the health agency, several specialists are already working to better understand the situation and a protocol is being prepared to care for patients and to cut the chain of transmission in the countries concerned by this event, which represents a new concern.

This type of smallpox, which is not fatal like the one that decimated the world in past centuries, is spread by prolonged contact with a sick person, the exchange of fluids and by contaminated objects.

Its symptoms are fever, chills, swollen lymph nodes and skin lesions, which usually begin on the hands, arms and face; there is no known specific treatment and it disappears in a few weeks.

It affects men and women equally and is not associated with any type of behavior or sexual preference, for which reason the WHO requested that no one carrying it should be stigmatized, as has occurred in some countries.

This recommendation may refer to an announcement made by the British Public Health Agency, where it states that the cases recently detected in the United Kingdom "are identified as homosexuals, bisexuals or other men who have sex with men".

The World Health Organization assured that it has not yet been proved, nor is it ruled out that it can be transmitted sexually, due to the fact that at that moment there is intimate contact between two people.

In Spain, the most affected country at the moment, with some 30 confirmed cases and 39 suspected cases, the initial focus seems to have been in a sauna establishment in Madrid, which was closed down a few days ago.

There are other infections in places as far away as Israel, the United States and Sweden, so all factors are being analyzed to understand the extent and causes of the disease.

Monkeypox was identified for the first time in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1970 and in the last decade infections have increased in West Africa, but until now it has been very rare in other parts of the world.

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