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No end in sight for the “Borceia flu”

By Nadine Stevensen; Associated Press

BORCEIA (AP) – Last week the AP reported on the outbreak in this industrial city in the north of Oceana of what is being termed the “Borceia flu.” Hospital officials in Borceia have confirmed that none of the patients suffering from this strange illness have yet recovered and that the patients remain in quarantine.

Borceia, an industrial and mining city near the border to Oscearta, was the location of the first cases of an illness that seems to be spreading. Infected individuals seem to quickly lose vitality, followed by a rapid deterioration of breathing and heart rate. In a matter of days the afflicted go from being a healthy individual to one hanging on the brink of death. Despite the gravity of the symptoms exhibited, no casualties have yet been reported. The hospitals in the area have been receiving an increasing number of patients and they have asked the population not to come to the hospital for any other medical emergency. They insist that the hospitals are now under quarantine. People needing medical treatment should wait for mobile medical units to visit them in their homes. Officials stress that only individuals exhibiting symptoms of the Borceia flu should be brought to the hospitals.



Hospital quarantine in Borceia

The government in the capital city Ocea has promised to do all that it can to help the city recover from the recent outbreak. The president called a special cabinet meeting to discuss the impact of the outbreak on the Borceian economy, particularly in the mining and manufacturing sectors. The president has stated that “together we can take our medicine, together we will recuperate.” With the next elections only 18 months away, this situation may be the occasion for President Blenzar (PDO) to demonstrate to his opponents in the ONP and the MCF and to the voters that he does indeed have the qualities of leadership necessary for reelection.

Borceia is one of the centers of foreign investment in Oceana, most noticeably with the PauSouYiRo group (PSYR), whose heavy investment in the area has funded many of the development and reform projects of the current government. The PSYR group in Oceana has been particularly aggressive in developing their pharmaceutical manufacturing plant. The deregulation of many industries by the business-friendly PDO government was particularly attractive for the PSYR group. When contacted about the effect of the outbreak on PSYR’s production, the company was unusually tight-lipped. The company spokesman stated that PSYR has always maintained the highest safety standards required by law and refused to comment on the outbreak.

Humanitarian workers in the rural areas southeast of the city have reported an increase in apparent stoning deaths in the villages. Individuals exhibiting some of the symptoms of Borceia flu have been rumored to regain their strength after three days, upon which villagers claim that these individuals have been possessed by animal spirits. Recovering individuals are then stoned to death, as is the custom in cases of demon-possession in the rural areas. Aid workers are concerned about a demon-possession hysteria and are calling on both national and international leaders to provide them with aid and resources to help prevent the illness and the panic from spreading further.

The international community is watching these developments closely. Tensions between Oceana and Oscearta have cooled considerably since the border disputes of the late 90s. The agreements brokered by the UN have tentatively opened up exchange between the two countries, but the economic disparities between the two countries has increased the tension between the historical enemies. The outbreak is being used as an excuse for Oscearta’s government to cancel a state visit to Ocea planned for the end of the month. International observers are concerned that this may signal the beginning of the end of the current ceasefire.