

Geneva, Tuesday

UNTESTED drugs can be used to treat patients infected with the Ebola virus, the World Health Organization says.

The WHO said it was ethical in light of the scale of the outbreak and high number of deaths - over 1,000 people have died in west Africa..

The statement was made after its

medical experts met in Switzerland on Monday to discuss the issue.

The move came as Liberia said it was getting an experimental drug, Zmapp, after requests to the US government.

The WHO said where experimental treatments are used there must be informed consent and the results of the treatment collected and shared.

In a statement, it said: "In the particular circumstances of this outbreak, and provided certain conditions are met, the panel reached consensus that it is ethical to offer unproven interventions with as yet unknown efficacy and adverse effects, as potential treatment or prevention."

Last week the WHO declared the Ebola outbreak was a global

health emergency.

Meanwhile, the Liberian Government said experimental drugs will be brought into the country later this week - although manufacturer Mapp Biopharmaceutical warned supplies are limited.

Zmapp has been used on two US aid workers who have shown signs of improvement. A Roman Catholic priest, infected with Ebola in Libe-

ria, who died after returning home to Spain is also thought to have been given the drug.

However, the drug has only been tested on monkeys and has not yet been evaluated for safety in humans.

There a handful of drugs that have been shown to work well in animals.

One is Zmapp - the drug re-

quested by the Liberian government. This contains a cocktail of antibodies that attack proteins on the surface of the virus.

Only one drug has moved onto early safety testing in humans. Known as TKM-Ebola this interrupts the genetic code of the virus and prevents it from making disease causing proteins.

The drug was trialled in healthy

volunteers at the beginning of 2014 but the American medicines regulator asked for further safety information. The manufacturer says human studies may soon resume.

Vaccines to protect against acquiring the disease have also been shown to work in primates. American authorities are considering fast-tracking their development and say they could be in use in 2016.