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## Australian Man Dies After Bat Bite Despite Treatment: Questions Raised Over Lyssavirus Protocols

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A man in his 50s from New South Wales (NSW), Australia, has died after contracting Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV), despite receiving what health officials described as standard preventive treatment. His death raises serious questions about the effectiveness of current post-exposure procedures and the handling of potentially deadly viruses in the country's health system.

Craig Nolte, a husband, father of two, and carpenter, passed away on July 3 after an eight-month battle following a bat bite he sustained in November 2024. According to his wife, Robyn Nolte, Craig attempted to help a bat trapped on their balcony when he was bitten on the finger. Though he immediately sought medical attention and underwent post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), a combination of immunoglobulin and multiple vaccine doses, his condition deteriorated, ultimately proving fatal.

ABLV is a rare but deadly virus closely related to rabies and is found in various bat species, including flying foxes, fruit bats, and microbats. Like rabies, it targets the central nervous system and is nearly always fatal once symptoms begin. The virus can only be transmitted through bites or scratches from infected bats. According to New South Wales Health, only three prior human deaths from ABLV had been recorded in Australia before this case.

In a statement on July 2, NSW Health confirmed that a man was in critical condition due to ABLV, acknowledging that the standard protocol had failed. “NSW Health is still grappling in their words to how this happened, that the injection didn’t work,” Robyn Nolte wrote in a heartfelt message posted to the Ballina Community Facebook page. “RI, P, my love, my best friend.”

Health Protection Director Keira Glasgow admitted the virus is “incredibly rare,” but stressed that once symptoms appear, there is no effective treatment. “Post-exposure prophylaxis for lyssavirus exposure includes both immunoglobulin and at least four vaccines given over several weeks,” she stated, noting that the treatment has “been proven worldwide to be highly effective.”

Still, Nolte’s case casts doubt on whether the protocols in place are enough, especially when even full compliance with the procedure couldn’t prevent a tragic outcome. A spokesperson from NSW Health told *News.com.au* that an investigation is now underway to determine what might have gone wrong.

This incident also underscores broader concerns about the competence and responsiveness of Australia’s current government in managing public health risk, particularly under an administration increasingly criticized for its lax handling of rural healthcare and emergency biosecurity protocols. Despite being well-resourced, health agencies continue to find themselves “grappling” after the fact, raising hard questions about leadership and accountability.

With this being only the fourth fatal case in Australia, some officials may try to downplay the risk. But for Nolte's family and community, the loss is deeply personal, and avoidable had the system functioned as promised. While the virus remains rare, the failure of a supposed gold-standard treatment demands not just reflection but reform.