

Health workers commit to taking lessons on Ebola to West Africa as U.S. missionaries discharged from hospital

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(RNS) An American doctor treated for Ebola, Kent Brantly, was discharged from Atlanta's Emory University Hospital Thursday (August 21).

"Please do not stop praying for the people of West Africa," Brantly said at a press conference Thursday, at which the room applauded. He thanked his medical team and the millions of people around the world praying for his recovery.

Another American aid worker, Nancy Writebol, was discharged Tuesday (August 19). She chose not to make a statement.

Bruce Ribner, medical director of the hospital's infectious disease unit, said Brantly will go to an undisclosed location with his wife and children.

Brantly and Writebol, a volunteer with Service in Mission USA, were flown to Emory from West Africa in early August and were treated in the hospital's specialized unit.

Ribner said the hospital performed extensive blood and urine tests on both patients and consulted with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention before deciding the two missionaries were ready to be released. Neither pose any risk to the public, he said. Five doctors and 21 nurses cared for Brantly and Writebol during their stay.

Ribner said he hopes what he and his colleagues learned about treating Ebola can help save other patients in Africa.

While in Liberia, Brantly received a blood transfusion from an Ebola survivor.

Both Brantly and Writebol received doses of an experimental drug, called Zmapp, which includes human-made antibodies against Ebola. Although Zmapp has shown promise in animals, it has not yet been tested in humans. Experts have said it's not

possible to conclude that Zmapp cured their disease, although getting good supportive care at Emory, one of the world's best hospitals, likely improved their chances of survival.

"If the question is, 'Did Zmapp do this?' The answer is that we just don't know," said Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease. "People who are in much less sophisticated medical care conditions in West Africa are recovering 50 percent of the time."

Without a carefully designed trial—involving a comparison group that doesn't receive the drug—doctors can't make conclusions about how a treatment works. About half of Ebola patients in the current outbreak are surviving without the experimental drug. But a Spanish priest who received Zmapp died, Fauci said.

Three Liberian health workers also received Zmapp. The drug's manufacturer, Mapp Biopharmaceutical of San Diego, has said there is no more of the drug left.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has sent at least 50 staff to West Africa to help contain the epidemic.

"We must re-commit to doing all we can to increase their chances of survival and to stop the spread of Ebola," said CDC director Thomas Frieden in a statement. "This outbreak is unprecedented, and it's likely to get worse before it gets better. We must respond in unprecedented way to stop the outbreak as soon as possible."

The World Health Organization [has reported](#) more than 1,350 deaths and 2,400 cases either confirmed or suspected to be caused by Ebola virus disease in Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone.

Samaritan's Purse, the Christian organization for which Brantly works, had 350 staff in Liberia as of August 21, with others planning to join them.

In concluding his statement, Brantly said he is "glad for any attention my sickness has attracted to the plight of West Africa in the midst of this epidemic. Please continue to pray for Liberia and the people of West Africa, and encourage those in positions of leadership and influence to do everything possible to bring this Ebola outbreak to an end."