

## Will we be prepared?

Dear friends,

May 23, 2018

The Ebola virus disease turned up in the General Hospital of Bikoro some 300 miles away from us. It would seem a safe distance but some of our Baptist hospitals have excellent reputations, often drawing patients from much farther away; even neighboring countries. Suddenly it's a BIG DEAL when anyone shows up with a fever in any hospital. Precious health workers represent a high proportion of Ebola victims. Will the staff in our Baptist hospitals be prepared if a family brings their Ebola patient through the door?

Ebola outbreaks make headlines because of the high mortality rate (50% or more) and the agony endured by those who die, and those who survive. Lots of common diseases here cause fevers. Hence in an area where Ebola is ravaging, you have to treat all fevers as Ebola until proven otherwise, a dangerous period in current patient management. First world hospitals would be mandated to keep on hand a stock of protective 'moon suits' and require regular training and drills for Ebola containment. No hospital out here has funds for expensive gear, rapid tests, or specialized training.

When Ebola was devastating West Africa in 2015, Katherine ordered an amount of Personal Protection Kits using White Cross funds. The epidemic never came to Congo, but the materials did and we are GRATEFUL to have them on hand now. But protective gear works only if donned correctly and removed in a strict order; to prevent the slightest potentially devastating exposure. At Vanga, doctors are drawing up basic strategies for triage, isolation, and management of the accompanying family (who normally feed and do the "nursing care" in our hospitals). We are now working on making training materials and opportunities available in our institutions and out in villages.

Congo has a good track record handling Ebola. The Congo government, USAID, CDC, and WHO are vigorously responding to the epidemic. It is not yet clear whether the crisis in Bikoro and neighboring Mbandaka is subsiding. Paul charged Timothy: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction (2Tim 4:2). In addition to resources, please pray we will know how to correct, when to be patient, have wise strategies, and be able to encourage frightened people. Thank you for your prayers and generous support in this season, especially pray for a swift end to this epidemic.



**Katherine checks out protective gear she is shipping to our Baptist hospitals in the interior.**

God Bless You

Wayne + Katherine