

Intercession Urged for Missionary With Ebola Still in Africa

The family of an American doctor stricken with the deadly Ebola virus in Liberia and brought to the United States for treatment has called for prayers for a missionary who was infected alongside him and is to be flown home this week.

The pair were in west Africa as part of an emergency response to the worst outbreak on record of Ebola, a particularly deadly hemorrhagic virus, which has killed more than 700 people since February.

The doctor, Kent Brantly, was flown on Saturday to Atlanta, where he is being treated by infectious disease specialists in a special isolation ward at Emory University Hospital.

A second U.S. aid worker who contracted Ebola with him, missionary Nancy Writebol, is expected to depart for the United States overnight on Monday, Liberia's government said.

Amber Brantly, Dr. Brantly's wife, said in a statement late on Sunday that she had been able to see her husband and that he was in good spirits.

"He thanked everyone for their prayers and asked for continued prayer for Nancy Writebol's safe return and full recovery," Amber Brantly said.

"Our family is rejoicing over Kent's safe arrival, and we are confident that he is receiving the very best care," she said.

Dr. Tom Frieden, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, said on Sunday that Brantly's condition was improving, but that it was too early to predict whether he would survive.

Brantly, a 33-year-old father of two young children, works for the North Carolina-based Christian organization, Samaritan's Purse.

Writebol, a 59-year-old mother of two who works for the missionary organization SIM USA, will arrive later because the medical aircraft can only carry one patient at a time.

Writebol's husband, David, who had been living and working in Liberia with his wife, is expected to travel home separately in the next few days, SIM USA has said.

While the death rate in the current epidemic is about 60 percent, experts say, Ebola can have a fatality rate of up to 90 percent of those infected.

Standard treatment for the disease is to provide supportive care. Doctors at Emory will try to maintain blood pressure and support breathing of the workers, with a respirator if needed, or provide dialysis if they experience kidney failure, as some Ebola sufferers do.

The facility in Atlanta that was chosen to treat the two infected Americans was set up with CDC and is one of four in the country with the ability to handle such cases.

The CDC has said it is not aware of any Ebola patient having been treated in the United States before. Five people entered the country in the past decade with either Lassa Fever or Marburg, both hemorrhagic fevers similar to Ebola.

Some participants at an Africa summit which begins in Washington on Monday will be screened for exposure to Ebola.

Writing by Daniel Wallis; editing by Curtis Skinner and Ron Popeski

© 2014 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.