

February 12, 2015 CDC Ebola Response Update

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Larry Thomas] Although direct patient care is not part of the CDC's mission, occasionally CDC's practicing physicians have the opportunity to treat patients outside their CDC role. Dr. Karen Wong is one such example. She went to Liberia with the US Public Health Service, and spent two months in the Monrovia Medical Unit. Because of the work she was going to do, she enrolled in CDC's training course designed for professionals deploying to West Africa.

[Dr. Karen Wong] The experience of working in an Ebola Treatment Unit, where I was working with contagious Ebola patients, is unlike anything that I've ever done in my career. Part of what let me keep going with doing this kind of scary, high risk work was knowing that I had been trained really well in keeping myself safe.

[Larry Thomas] Dr. Wong is one of the 450 healthcare workers who have taken the 3-day training course that teaches medical professionals how to safely work in an Ebola treatment unit.

[Dr. Karen Wong] The CDC training course was held in Anniston, Alabama and included both classroom components where we heard lectures from different subject matter experts about Ebola and about infection control, and it also included a practical component where we were able to simulate being in a mock Ebola treatment unit or ETU.

[Larry Thomas] Dr. Wong found the time she spent practicing how to move around in an ETU, and communicate with colleagues while wearing personal protective equipment, were skills she immediately put to use while working with the U.S. Public Health Service in Liberia.

[Dr. Karen Wong] In our facility not only do we have to deal with the barriers of our personal protective equipment such as our masks, and our hoods, but we also had to be able to communicate over the roar of the generators and the air conditioning.

[Larry Thomas] The course not only gave doctors and nurses the skills they needed to protect themselves from Ebola, it also created a lasting community where they could share their experiences and lessons learned. The instructors created a Facebook page that students use to stay in touch, and many worked together in West Africa.

[Dr. Karen Wong] I had an interesting experience actually when I went to Liberia and did a mentored experience, where the person who was mentoring me was actually an Anniston alum. We talked about the course and how well it had prepared us.

[Larry Thomas] Signups are still available for the two remaining courses in Anniston. The course is free for students, but their supporting organization needs to cover their travel expenses. Any licensed medical professional scheduled to work in an Ebola treatment unit in West Africa can attend.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.