

Nebraska doctors say Ebola patient making progress

September 8 2014, by Josh Funk



The ambulance transporting Dr. Rick Sacra, 51, who was infected with Ebola while serving as an obstetrician in Liberia arrives escorted by police vehicles to the Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, Neb., Friday, Sept. 5, 2014. Sacra, who served with North Carolina-based charity SIM, is the third American aid worker infected by the Ebola virus. He will begin treatment in the hospital's 10-bed special isolation unit, the largest of four such units in the U.S. (AP Photo/The World-Herald, Matt Miller)

The Nebraska doctors treating an American aid worker who became

infected with Ebola while working in Liberia said Sunday that he is making progress, but it's not yet clear if he will recover.

Dr. Rick Sacra, 51, arrived at the Nebraska Medical Center on Friday for treatment in the hospital's specialized isolation unit. Sacra remains very tired and stable, but was more alert Sunday, said Dr. Phil Smith, one of the [doctors](#) treating him who gave an update Sunday.

"We are encouraged by what we see, but it's too early to say he has turned a corner," Smith said.

Sacra has been helping with his own treatment by providing information about Ebola to the doctors because he saw it in Africa.

The doctor from Worcester, Massachusetts, spent about 15 years practicing [family medicine](#) at a hospital in Liberia with the North Carolina-based charity SIM. Two other Americans have also become ill with Ebola while helping people suffering from the disease.

In West Africa, roughly 2,100 people have died during the outbreak, but Ebola has not been confirmed as the cause for all of the deaths. Sacra's wife, Debbie, said in a statement Saturday that she hopes the world will focus on the larger Ebola outbreak, not just her husband's illness.

The doctors said Sacra has joked with them about baseball because he is a Boston Red Sox fan and Smith follows the New York Yankees.

"He's made a few jokes," Smith said. "In my experience, that's a good sign."

Smith said Sacra is receiving an experimental drug that is different than the one given to the two earlier American Ebola patients treated at a specialized isolation unit at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta. Those

patients were given the unproven drug ZMapp, but the limited supply is now exhausted.

Sacra was able to visit with family members and friends for about half an hour on Saturday and Sunday via a video conference system at the hospital. Dr. Angela Hewlett said [family members](#) read Bible verses to him.



SIM USA President Bruce Johnson speaks at a news conference in Omaha, Neb., Friday Sept. 5, 2014, on the condition of ebola patient Dr. Rick Sacra, 51, who is being treated at the Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, Neb. Sacra, who served with North Carolina-based charity SIM, is the third American aid worker infected by the Ebola virus. He will begin treatment in the hospital's 10-bed special isolation unit, the largest of four such units in the U.S. (AP Photo/Nati Harnik)

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