

Volunteer guidelines for clinicians in the Ebola epidemic

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Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness Journal has released a novel, informative article that speaks to volunteers within the Ebola epidemic. The article, contributed by a consortium of Boston-based hospitals, is entitled Sign Me Up: Rules of the Road for Humanitarian Volunteers during the Ebola Outbreak. The authors paint an honest picture of volunteer circumstances, and ask those considering volunteering to not make the decision lightly. They insist that the "global healthcare community must and will rise to serve."

The World Health Organization has advocated for having more volunteers on the ground to aid the outbreak. The article by the Boston consortium reiterates this, though pushes for having thoroughly trained and prepared volunteers. The authors imply that is best to have trained emergency response clinicians, instead of medical students and trainees on the ground. Experience reigns king in an event as such, and patients will surely benefit most with the aid of experienced physicians. The article provides guidelines that volunteer organizations as well as individual volunteers must emphasize and implicate to achieve volunteer well-being and safety.

The authors recognize that volunteers serve at great personal risk, to provide clinical care to others. The authors also find it important to acknowledge that the chance of medical evacuation is low, despite the cases widely reported by the media. With the provided guidelines in mind and necessitated, the risk has potential to decline.

The authors ask [volunteers](#) to consider the following:

- Time commitment (more than 2 weeks)
- Personal and organization health insurance, medical evacuation insurance, disability and life insurance
- Family circumstances
- Organization and individual [emergency response](#) experience
- Personal, mental and professional readiness
- Comprehensive pre-deployment training
- Proper personal protection equipment (PPE, often provided by organization) and medical supplies
- Return-to-work considerations
- Organization contingency plans for evacuation or ill/injured staff

Provided by Society for Disaster Medicine and Public Health

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