

# Surgeon with Ebola arrives in US for treatment

November 16 2014, by Margery Beck

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Health workers in protective suits transport Dr. Martin Salia, a surgeon working in Sierra Leone who had been diagnosed with Ebola, from a jet that brought him from Sierra Leone to a waiting ambulance that will take him to the Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, Neb., Saturday, Nov. 15, 2014. Dr. Salia is the third Ebola patient at the Omaha hospital and the 10th person with Ebola to be treated in the U.S. (AP Photo/Nati Harnik)

A surgeon who contracted Ebola while working in Sierra Leone continued treatment Sunday at a biocontainment unit in Nebraska where two other people with the disease have been successfully treated.

Dr. Martin Salia, who was diagnosed with Ebola on Monday, landed at Eppley Airfield in Omaha on Saturday afternoon and was taken by ambulance to the Nebraska Medical Center.

The hospital said the medical crew that accompanied Salia, 44, from West Africa determined he was stable enough to fly, but that the team caring for him in Sierra Leone indicated he was critically ill and "possibly sicker than the first patients successfully treated in the United States."

The disease has killed more than 5,000 people in West Africa, mostly in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. Of the 10 people treated for the disease in the U.S., all but one has recovered.

Salia's ambulance to the hospital was accompanied by a single Nebraska State Patrol cruiser and a fire department vehicle—a subdued arrival in contrast to the August delivery of Dr. Rick Sacra, whose ambulance was flanked by numerous police cars, motorcycles and fire vehicles.

Salia has been working as a general surgeon at Kissy United Methodist Hospital in the Sierra Leone capital of Freetown. It's not clear whether he was involved in the care of Ebola patients. Kissy is not an Ebola treatment unit, but Salia worked in at least three other facilities, United Methodist News said, citing health ministry sources.

Salia, a Sierra Leone citizen who lives in Maryland, first showed Ebola symptoms on Nov. 6 but tested negative for the virus. He eventually tested positive on Monday.



Health workers in protective suits transport Dr. Martin Salia, a surgeon working in Sierra Leone who had been diagnosed with Ebola, from a jet that brought him from Sierra Leone to a waiting ambulance that will take him to the Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, Neb., Saturday, Nov. 15, 2014. Dr. Salia is the third Ebola patient at the Omaha hospital and the 10th person with Ebola to be treated in the U.S. (AP Photo/Nati Harnik)

The U.S. State Department said it helped facilitate the transfer of Salia; the U.S. Embassy in Freetown said he paid for the expensive evacuation. The travel costs and care of other Ebola patients flown to the U.S. have been covered by the groups they worked for in West Africa.

Salia's wife, Isatu Salia, said in a telephone interview that when she spoke to her husband early Friday his voice sounded weak and shaky. But he told her "I love you" in a steady voice, she said.

The two prayed together, and their children, ages 12 and 20, are coping, Isatu Salia said, calling her husband "my everything."



This 2013 file photo provided by United Brethren in Christ, shows Dr. Martin Salia. Salia who was diagnosed with Ebola on Monday, landed at Eppley Airfield in Omaha, Neb., Saturday, Nov. 17, 2014, and was being transported to the Nebraska Medical Center. (AP Photo/United Brethren in Christ, Jeff Bleijerveld, File)

Nebraska Medical Center spokesman Taylor Wilson said members of Salia's family were not at the hospital Saturday, but were expected to arrive "in the near future."

Sierra Leone is one of the three West Africa nations hit hard by an Ebola epidemic this year. Five other doctors in Sierra Leone have contracted Ebola, and all have died.



The plane carrying Dr. Martin Salia, a surgeon working in Sierra Leone who had been diagnosed with Ebola, lands at Eppley Airfield in Omaha, Neb., Saturday, Nov. 15, 2014. Dr. Salia is the third Ebola patient at Nebraska Medical Center hospital and the 10th person with Ebola to be treated in the U.S. (AP Photo/Nati Harnik)



In this April 2014 photo provided by the United Methodist News Service, Dr. Martin Salia, left, performs surgery at the United Methodist Church's Kissy Hospital outside Freetown, Sierra Leone. The hospital was closed Nov. 11 after Salia, chief medical officer and surgeon, tested positive for Ebola. Salia who was diagnosed with Ebola on Monday, landed at Eppley Airfield in Omaha, Neb., Saturday, Nov. 17, 2014, and was being transported to the Nebraska Medical Center. (AP Photo/United Methodist News Service, Mike DuBose)  
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In this April 2014 photo provided by the United Methodist News Service, Dr. Martin Salia, right, visits with Bishop John K. Yambasu at the United Methodist Church's Kissy Hospital outside Freetown, Sierra Leone. Salia who was diagnosed with Ebola on Monday, landed at Eppley Airfield in Omaha, Neb., Saturday, Nov. 17, 2014, and was being transported to the Nebraska Medical Center. (AP Photo/United Methodist News Service, Mike DuBose)  
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