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Description

Brianna Aguirre, a nurse at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas, is speaking out about how the hospital handled the treatment of Ebola victim Thomas Eric Duncan. Meanwhile officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are questioned at a congressional hearing about their response to the potential outbreak.

Keywords

Ebola, Virus, Outbreak, Nurses, Nursing, Nina Pham, Emory University Hospital, Emory University, National Institutes of Health, NIH, Bethesda, Maryland, Amber Vinson, Briana Aguirre, Contact Tracing, Contacts, Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital, Isolation Units, Isolation, Clay Jenkins, Dallas, Texas, Thomas Eric Duncan, Thomas Duncan, Daniel Varga, Texas Health Resources, Congressional Hearing, Congress, Capitol Hill, Centers for Disease and Prevention, CDC, Diana DeGette, Tom Frieden, Ohio, Akron, Cleveland, Exposure, Falisha Lee, Hospitals, Safety Procedures, Medical Waste, Deadly Disease, Disease, Ebola Virus Disease, EVD, Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever, EHF, Health, Contagious Diseases, Infectious Diseases, Communicable Diseases
Texas Presbyterian Hospital in Hot Seat over Ebola Response

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:
And let's begin here tonight with a little perspective. Ebola has so far killed upwards of 4,500 people in Western Africa and one patient here out of three known cases. Nevertheless, the presence of Ebola in this country has caused fear, in some cases mild panic. And we've learned not all of our medical facilities are ready for it. That was made clear again today. We have it all covered again tonight, beginning again tonight with NBC's Kate Snow at the hospital in Dallas. Kate, good evening.

KATE SNOW, reporting:
Good evening, Brian. We have late word tonight from the CDC. They say they cannot rule out the possibility that Amber Vinson, the nurse, may have been sick when she first flew a week ago on Friday to Ohio. And that means they're now going to be looking for passengers on that flight as well as the second flight that she took on Monday of this week. Vinson was moved to Emory University Hospital. And tonight the other nurse, Nina Pham, is being flown to the NIH in Bethesda. Today, hazmat teams continued the cleanup at the apartment of Amber Vinson, the nurse taken to Emory last night. Nina Pham, who's been at Texas Health Presbyterian since Saturday, is headed to Bethesda. The county executive says the hospital here only has three isolation units, and unfortunately they need to be ready to deal with new Ebola patients.

CLAY JENKINS (Dallas County Judge): If we're going to have more cases, it's likely that they're going to be coming up soon.

SNOW: It sounds like you're really worried about that.

JENKINS: I'm-- I'm extremely concerned given that I have 75 heroic health care workers who were exp--
potentially exposed to the same sort of risk that Nina and Amber were.

SNOW: On the Today Show this morning, Nurse Briana Aguirre who's still employed here described a hospital that was woefully unprepared to deal with Ebola.

BRIANA AGUIRRE (Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Nurse): I just-- I just-- I just couldn't believe it, you know. In the second week of Ebola crisis at my hospital, the only gear they're offering us at that time and up until that time is gear that is allowing our necks to be uncovered.

SNOW: She said contaminated garbage was stacked up in the hallway.

AGUIRRE: Our infectious disease control nurses, they had been up and down that hallway where there was garbage piled to the ceiling without so much as even gloves on, so much-- without so much as even having their feet covered and then just walking into other general areas that are supposed to be clean.

SNOW: In response, the hospital referred us to a written statement released earlier this morning, saying, Thomas Eric Duncan was moved directly to a private room and placed in isolation. Staff wore the appropriate personal protective equipment as recommended by the CDC at the time, and waste was well-contained in accordance with standards, and it was located in safe and containable locations. Skyping into a hearing on Capitol Hill, a hospital official apologized for how they cared for Duncan.

DR. DANIEL VARGA (Texas Health Resources): We made mistakes. We did not correctly diagnose his symptoms as those of Ebola, and we are deeply sorry.

SNOW: The director of the Centers for Disease Control was questioned about Amber Vinson flying on a commercial plane this Monday while running a fever of 99.5. Vinson did call the CDC and was never told not to fly.

REPRESENTATIVE DIANA DEGETTE (D-Colorado): She was told by your agency she could board the plane, is that right? I just have one more question.

DR. TOM FRIEDEN (CDC): That is my understanding.

REPRESENTATIVE DEGETTE: Now, your protocol--

DR. FRIEDEN: I need to correct that.

REPRESENTATIVE DEGETTE: Okay.

DR. FRIEDEN: I-- I-- I have not reviewed exactly what was said, but she did contact our agency and she did board the plane.

SNOW: The ripple effect from the actions of one patient spread from Texas to Ohio. In Belton in Central Texas, three schools were closed today because two students were on Vinson's flight. At two Cleveland hospitals, 13 nurses on the flight were put on furlough. Schools were closed in Akron and a Cleveland suburb. And anyone who was at this bridal shop in Akron on Saturday is being asked to call a special hotline. Vinson shopped there over the weekend planning for her own wedding. A friend of Vinson's defended her on Facebook: "It saddens me the way the media has portrayed her," she wrote, "and in my eyes she is a hero." The pastor for Thomas Eric Duncan's fiancée says she got a phone call today from a hospital official for the first time since his death more than a week ago now, expressing their regret that they could not save Duncan and apologizing. Brian.

WILLIAMS: Kate Snow at the hospital in Dallas starting us off again tonight. Kate, thanks. That nurse we just heard from in Kate's report, Briana Aguirre, believes she is risking her job at the hospital by coming
forward and speaking. But as she told Matt Lauer this morning, she felt she just couldn't stay silent anymore.

BRIANA AGUIRRE: My co-workers, I know that a lot of you will be proud of me right now. And I'm sorry for those of you that are not. But I'm-- what I'm doing here is-- is not wrong and-- and I don't believe anyone can argue that. And I'm just-- I'm very concerned about losing my job. It's-- it is the-- it's the best job I ever had. I travel a great distance to work there. I don't live close to the hospital. I'm-- I'm the breadwinner of my family and I'm terrified. I'm just like any other, you know, the majority of middle class, working class people. I'm just a couple paychecks away from not being able to pay my mortgage, and I'm-- and I'm terrified about that. And I don't know about my future there at that hospital or at any hospital.

MATT LAUER: Briana, finally for you, you're in that 21 day period where you're monitoring your temperature a couple of times a day, although as I mentioned, there are no restrictions placed on you moving around right now. But if-- and I-- I don't-- you know, this is hypothetical, if you were to start to experience symptoms of Ebola, Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital would be the recommended hospital for you to go to for treatment. How would you feel about that?

AGUIRRE: I am-- you know, I've played that situation out in my head. And knowing what I know, I would try anything and everything to refuse to go there to be treated. I would feel at risk by going there. If I don't actually have Ebola, I may contract it there. It is how I actually feel and I would do anything to refuse to go there.

WILLIAMS: Nurse Briana Aguirre this morning on Today. And it's worth noting tonight at least one other staffer from the hospital told NBC News she has confidence in Texas Presbyterian, feels the hospital has done a good job keeping the staff informed.