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Ebola Update



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SOUTH AFRICA

When our mentor Daniel Fountain served in the Congo in 1995 there was an Ebola Virus Disease outbreak starting in Kikwit which eventually killed 240 out of 300 people infected once the virus spread from village people to the hospital setting. Many health care workers died. This disease was first noticed about 40 years ago, and the recent West African outbreak from December 2013 to June 2016 was the first to get to major cities and threaten the health care systems of three nations while killing 40 percent of people infected for a total of over 10,000 horrible deaths. In Liberia 10% of the health care workers died, and many hospitals and clinics needed to be closed. In October 2014, with funding from One Great Hour of Sharing, we began work on the animation Understanding Ebola: Prevention, Symptoms and Treatment with funding from Here is the link for internet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGi2paf-Mu0> Over time this animation has climbed to third position for Ebola animations on YouTube showing that people found it useful.

Good news about Ebola? The results of a vaccination trial by Merck done in Guinea tested 6000 people who were vaccinated with the rVSV-ZEBOV vaccine. The stunning result is that all the people vaccinated early after exposure to a person with Ebola virus were protected from infection, and that that vaccine is safe. It also seems to protect contacts who were not vaccinated, known as herd immunity. Even though further work will need to be done, 300,000 doses have been stockpiled, against the day when Ebola virus is detected again in Africa or elsewhere. For the first time, a vaccine now exists which will help stop the next outbreak from infecting many more people in major cities.

Looking back on this tragedy, we see the result of what happens when we work together and find solutions. Now instead of desperation and hiding people away, the next outbreak will be met with effective vaccination. From the days of Edward Jenner, dairymaids and pock-free faces with vaccination it took about 200 years to end smallpox. Could Ebola be ended in four decades since its discovery by vaccination? We hope so!