

Texas nurse was familiar with risks of Ebola virus

By Matt Sedensky and Nomaan Merchant
The Associated Press

DALLAS — A Texas nurse who caught Ebola from an infected patient was no stranger to the risks of working around one of the world's most feared viruses.

In nursing school, Nina Pham had studied microbiology and infection prevention. A classmate said students discussed Ebola in detail, even reading *The Hot Zone*, a bestselling 1994 book about the disease's origins.

Pham continued her training after graduation, obtaining certification in critical care two months before Ebola arrived in the United States.

On October 14, her infection raised new questions about whether American hospitals and their staffs are adequately prepared to contain Ebola. And early the next day, Texas health officials announced that a preliminary test indicated another healthcare worker at the hospital, Amber Vinson, was infected with the disease.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention acknowledged that Pham might not have been infected if a special response team had been sent to Dallas immediately after the Liberian patient was diagnosed.

CDC director Tom Frieden said the agency is creating an "Ebola response team" and bolstering training nationwide on how to respond to an Ebola case.

Pham, the first person to contract the disease within the United States, was among more than 70 staff members at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas involved in Thomas Eric Duncan's care before he died October 8. The 26-year-old nurse remained hospitalized in good condition and said in a statement that she was "doing well."

When Pham's mother learned her daughter was caring for Duncan, Pham tried to reassure her that she would be



safe. Pham told her: "Mom, no. Don't worry about me," family friend Christina Tran told The Associated Press.

Duncan's medical records, which the family shared with The Associated Press, show that Pham helped care for Duncan throughout his hospital stay, including the day he arrived in intensive care and the day before he died.

The records make numerous mentions of protective gear worn by hospital staff, and Pham herself notes wearing the gear in visits to Duncan's room. But there is no indication in the records of her first encounter with Duncan, on September 29, that Pham donned any protective gear.

Pham received her nursing degree in 2010 from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. A school spokeswoman and the classmate described the curriculum. The classmate spoke on the condition of anonymity, saying she did not want to infringe on Pham's privacy.

Two nurses from Emory University Hospital in Atlanta with special training in Ebola care are now helping to train staff at the Dallas hospital, Frieden said.

"I've been hearing loud and clear from

healthcare workers from around the country that they're worried," said Frieden, who also said the CDC is considering whether Ebola patients should be transferred to one of four hospitals with specialized bio-containment units.

Though the CDC said a breach in protocol was probably to blame for Pham's infection, the man's illness was so complicated and rare that the risk of transmission would have existed at any hospital, experts said.

"Even in the best of hospitals following all the protocol, we can minimize the risk to hospital personnel, but we can never eliminate it," said Dr. David Weber, an epidemiologist at the University of North Carolina's hospital.

What's more, staff in Atlanta and another containment unit in Omaha, Nebraska, would have trained and drilled for years for the possibility of such an occurrence, and they had advance warning of an Ebola case heading their way.

"They were notified in advance, 24, 48 hours — they had plenty of time to prepare, they were met at the door by people all garbed," Weber said. "That's a more controlled situation than a patient

HOSPITAL HOT ZONE. In this frame grab from video provided by Texas Health Resources, Nina Pham, who contracted Ebola after treating a Liberian man, talks while being recorded at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas before being flown to the National Institutes of Health outside Washington. (AP Photo/Texas Health Resources, Dr. Gary Weinstein)

walking through the door that you think may or may not have Ebola."

The isolation unit at the Nebraska Medical Center holds drills about every three months, rotating through various infectious diseases, including Ebola, avian flu, smallpox, and anthrax, said Shelly Schwedhelm, nursing and training director of the unit.

The drills always include "an element of personal protective equipment," she said.

"I look at it just like I would a sport," she said. "Your teams practice a lot, so that hopefully, when you get to the game, people know what they're doing and how to do it and what role they play."

Martha Kuhl, a pediatric nurse in Oakland, California, and an officer with National Nurses United, said the same training and gear that helped safeguard nurses at Emory and in Nebraska must be offered everywhere.

Kuhl said she simply received a lengthy e-mail about Ebola, but no other training.

"Most nurses have not been properly prepared," she said. "You never know when you're going to be approached by a patient or family member who meets the criteria."

Back in Texas, people who know the Pham family said they were part of a closely knit, deeply religious community of Vietnamese Catholics in Fort Worth.

The Rev. Jim Khoi, pastor at Our Lady of Fatima Church, said Pham appeared to be in good spirits when she spoke to her mother, Ngoc Pham, via video chat.

Pham's mother is "calm," Khoi said. "She trusts in god. And she asks for prayers."

Associated Press writers Margery Beck in Omaha, Nebraska and Alex Sanz in Dallas contributed to this report.

Arthur Dong: Forbidden City, USA

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beautiful dancer named Mary Mammon who spoke about Asian racial stereotypes of the time, such as how people thought all Asians were either cooks or a houseboy named "John." Dong said she was most aware of "what was going on" before her and during her lifetime in terms of racial equality.

"They're all my favorites in different kinds of ways," Dong said. "Everybody had something about them that made them so unique and exciting to be with."

Though he found a distributor, Dong self-published the book, just as he has produced his films independently. The book has received a good amount of notice. Lisa See, who reached out to Dong when she was researching her novel, *China Dolls*, set in the Chinese-American nightclub era, wrote the foreword.

Dong's current project is finishing a film about Haing S. Ngor (1940-1996), the physician who won an Academy Award for best supporting actor in *The Killing Fields*. He has spent time archiving his raw film material after

realizing that termites had eaten through to his original film stock in his store-room. Now the voices and film of his past projects will be housed in the Arthur Dong archive as part of the film and television archive at the University of California, Los Angeles. He's still not sure where the photos and memorabilia from the *Forbidden City, USA* book will be housed. He's hoping for another museum exhibit similar to one he held at the San Francisco Public Library, but he's not sure what will happen to it after that.

Dong is certain that young people, especially those who want to be artists, writers, or performers, can learn from this time period of American history. "If you've got a dream, don't listen to your parent or what society says you can or can't do. Don't worry about the cultural or racial barriers. If it's in you and you have talent, you have to know what you want and go after it. It's nothing new. But to see that drive embodied in Chinese-American nightclubs during the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, that was, and still is, new."

Groundbreaking, Hawaiian blessing for telescope

HONOLULU (AP) — A groundbreaking and Hawaiian blessing ceremony launched construction on the summit of Mauna Kea to build one of the world's largest telescopes.

The events for the \$1.4 billion Thirty Meter Telescope project were shown via a live webcast because of limited access to the construction site, which is in an area with harsh physical conditions.

The telescope will be able to observe

planets that orbit stars other than the sun. It should also help scientists see some 13 billion light years away for a glimpse into the early years of the universe.

Some people oppose building the telescope in a place held sacred by Native Hawaiians.

A group of Canadian and California universities initiated the project. Institutions in China, India, and Japan later signed on as partners.

Japan volcano victims leave photos of last moments

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"This is an amazing photo. But I wish he had fled instead of taking pictures. I'd rather have him back," Hiromi said. "I hope to hike up there someday, perhaps 10 years later. I want to see what my husband saw."

Yasuo Ito, 54, didn't even have time to eat the lunch he packed.

His wife, also named Hiromi, told NHK that Ito, a prefecture-funded housing agency employee, was among six members from a nature conservation volunteer group. Only three survived.

She identified his body and received his ash-coated knapsack. She pulled out a lunchbox, which survived despite cracks on a side,

then opened the top. His handmade egg salad sandwiches were untouched.

"Poor thing, he should have eaten this," she said. "He must be getting hungry by now."

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