

Ebola? Bring it on.

Sandy Summers

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Want to contain Ebola? Bring all the infected patients here for treatment.

NOVEMBER 18, 2014, 1:50 PM

Does our nation run the other way in the face of deadly threats? Hardly. The United States has shown no reluctance to confront terrorists anywhere in the world. But now that the threat is too small to see — the Ebola virus — many of us, gripped by fear, seem to want to head for the hills.

I say bring Ebola on. Developed nations like the United States should be treating as many Ebola patients as possible, not trying to exclude them and stigmatizing health workers who try to help. The best way to stop Ebola from spreading across the world is to contain it now by welcoming all infected patients here (or to other developed nations) where we are better able to provide excellent care and bring the outbreak under control. If we wait much longer, the disease may kill millions — including many more in the United States. We must control Ebola now.

At least one official at the U.S. State Department has called for governments to bring infected health workers back to developed nations for treatment. That is a good first step, but we should go much further.

At the time of this writing, the U.S. has a 20 percent mortality rate in the treatment of Ebola patients. Sadly, Africa's mortality rate appears to be about **70 percent**. Many patients are **not even being treated** because of a lack of health workers and facilities.

Article continues below ↓

Nurse staffing levels are probably the most important factor in the different mortality rates. Doctors Without Borders / Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is **pressing** specifically for more nurses. It reports that the nurse-to-patient ratio in African Ebola tents is 1 to 15, sometimes 1 to 20. Ebola patients in the U.S. appear to have had the benefit of at least a 1 to 1 ratio.

That is a drastic and life-saving difference. **Quality nursing care saves lives**, particularly the lives of patients with this kind of disease, which above all requires skilled nurses to deliver intensive care by

constantly monitoring for signs of deterioration and reacting quickly with good judgment.

Funds for health care are scarce everywhere, but there's no question that we and the rest of the developed world are better prepared to confront this epidemic. Health workers in West Africa have good information on Ebola and care protocols, as well as a boatload of courage, but they still lack the infrastructure and sufficient nurses to stop the epidemic. In the U.S., we have a nurse-population ratio of about **1 to 100**. In Africa, the ratio is about **1 to 1,000**.

The number of nurses and other health workers in the developed world who can leave their jobs and travel thousands of miles to Africa to care for Ebola patients is limited. And some developed nations **have been reluctant** to send health workers to Africa to treat Ebola.

It is also true that too many in the United States have allowed fear of the disease to overcome reason, as reflected in the efforts to bully Maine nurse Kaci Hickox into an unnecessary quarantine and in the shunning of care givers at New York's Bellevue Hospital. That stigmatizing may deter some health workers from volunteering to care for Ebola victims.

Yet many nurses here and in other developed nations are prepared, willing and able to care for Ebola patients in their home nations, where there are more resources and safeguards. Since the first U.S. Ebola cases, particularly the infections of Texas nurses Nina Pham and Amber Joy Vinson, the nation has **increased its preparedness**. And our nurses have the equipment, the isolation wards, and the ability to replace electrolytes and rehydrate effectively, which is vital to Ebola care.

It is reckless to rely on the infrastructure of the **very poorest countries** to protect the health of the entire world. Transporting and caring for hundreds of Ebola patients would require a real investment in the short term, but we should think of it as an investment in our long-term health and well being. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control **predict** that unless we alter the course of the epidemic, up to 1.4 million people in Sierra Leone and Liberia combined will become infected by January 20, 2015. A global outbreak is a real possibility. We must act quickly and decisively to stop the epidemic.

We should do all we can to strengthen West Africa's health infrastructure, but it is unlikely that we can do so fast enough to stem the outbreak. To protect ourselves and prevent an enormous global health crisis, we should offer to bring all Ebola patients here now to treat them.

Sandy Summers is co-author of "Saving Lives: Why the Media's Portrayal of Nursing Puts Us All at Risk" and executive director of The Truth About Nursing. Her email is ssummers@truthaboutnursing.org.

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JFCanton

Has the prediction of how many people will be infected been updated? That is nearly two months old.

In any case, if the number of nurses is the thing, we would probably do best to train more nurses from those countries. Wandering off on the tangent of how returning, possibly-sick workers will be treated is not to the point, since we know that they will be segregated that is in some way to their inconvenience; the question is to what extent.

11 months ago

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JFCanton

@SandySummers

Bureaucracy fouls everything up on the first try. Hickox came in on the heels of the doctor who was on the town in NYC while becoming symptomatic. I agree that we could show appreciation. But then it should be off to a comfortable 21-day vacation (and middle of nowhere, Maine wasn't a bad spot).

In any case, you didn't really address any of the concerns about costs. Realistically, it's not going

to happen to bring the patients here... even if money were no object, how would... » more

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SandySummers

@JFCanton I am not sure that science would back up your description of the treatment plan. When people lose copious amounts of fluid through vomiting and diarrhea they need fluid replacement so they can maintain a blood pressure to be able to perfuse their vital organs. It has nothing to do with drowning the organisms, they live best in a wet environment. As far as "instruct[ing] natives," how to provide nursing care, I'm afraid that phrase makes it sound as if they are not even human! In any... » more

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possumman

We need a lot more sick, dying people from the third world here, we don't have enough now. It is bound to make things better and it won't cost much, after all it is just other people's money.

11 months ago

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possumman

@SandySummers Just how many sick dying people do we need to bring here to make things better over there- and how will we get them to go home if and when they are better. Seems like a terrible idea, if ebola is inevitable here bringing more in will be better? That is insane. We have enough problems with healthy uneducated people from third world countries here now, why bring in sick ones

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SandySummers

@Possumman We should bring Ebola patients here so we can treat them and contain the virus. Right now reports say that 40% of people with Ebola are not even being treated or contained. That is disastrous. It is a recipe for each infected person to spread it to dozens more. If we bring as many of the infected people here now, we can contain it now and we will not have to deal with an epidemic later. But we must be quick and decisive.

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Stan501

The title was, of course, meant to be provocative. And it succeeded. As counter-intuitive as it may seem, the writer (who does not appear to be an employee of The Sun, btw) explains that bringing large numbers of Ebola-infected people to the U.S. - or to an equally well-equipped developed nation - would SAVE MORE lives, not COST MORE lives, and I think that is undeniably correct. The tricky moral question is how many potential

deaths in far away countries would justify, for most people,... » more

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Baltimore Colts

@Stan501

then let the writer go to where is this an issue and take the nurse from Maine. Perhaps ask the Chinese to empty their overflowing coffers and the Nigerians flush with oil cash.

We don't need to import more problems to this country.

11 months ago

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Wesley Dodds

@Stan501 Stan501 - It is good for others to suggest how Americans should "risk some deaths" of Americans to prevent deaths of West Africans. It is a noble idea, which will really result in the impeachment of President Obama. That is all that will really happen. It has been a MIRACLE that some of the Ebola infected from West Africa have not found their way to our children and our elderly, not the young millennial health care workers who had HAZMAT suits most of the time when THEY got infected. ... » more

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Wesley Dodds

Baltimore Sun publishes: "Want to contain Ebola? Bring all the infected patients here for treatment." OK, your editors approved this, so you must believe it. \$1 Million for 2 patients. Times 5000? \$2.5 Billion. Times 10,000? \$5 Billion. Can the Baltimore Sun write a check for this? \$5 Billion. Can you put your money where you mouth is? Because I think the American people would like to know that. You know, write it to "U.S. Treasury." Is the Baltimore Sun that profitable? You have an... » more

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@SandySummers Ask the Saudis for \$\$ or the other African neighbors, like Nigeria, who have squandered billions of dollars..

Cute, from your advocacy site:

"We urge everyone not to use the term "doctor" when "physician" is meant."

Hmm..I will call my doctor a Doctor and a nurse, Nurse.

11 months ago

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Wesley Dodds

@SandySummers S

I agree that we need to help the people in West Africa.
But we cannot help them by: bankrupting the American people,

The title of the article is: "Ebola? Bring it on," based on your sentence: "I say bring Ebola on."
with a "shareline" of "Want to contain Ebola? Bring all the infected patients here for treatment."

I think it is extreme to suggest we should bring all the West Africa Ebola patients to the USA. We know for a fact that this would cost \$2.5 to \$5 billion just... » more

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Wesley Dodds

Sandy - let me just add, now that we know it is costing the U.S. \$1 million for two patients, that provides a further unbelievable nature to your "bring Ebola on" comment. I have a suggestion Sandy, if you really want to "bring Ebola on," then how about you raise the \$1 million necessary to pay the outstanding bill for just 2 Ebola patients. And then AFTER you have paid that \$1 million yourself, please let us know how brave you think we need to be to bring more Ebola patients into the U.S. It... » more

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the linpo

@Wesley Dodds you are still an idiot

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@the linpo Adds nothing to discussion.

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Wesley Dodds

Sandy Summers: "I say bring Ebola on." What a mentally challenged and disturbed comment, which you would expect perhaps by some mentally challenged Internet troll, rather than an actual writer for the Baltimore Sun. Would the Baltimore Sun publish "bring Bubonic Plague on," "bring Smallpox on," "bring Anthrax on," etc.? But the far-left has become so mentally challenged by their EXTREME partisanship, that even such obviously disturbed comments like "I say bring Ebola on," can get approval by... » more

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the linpo

@Wesley Dodds Wesley, can I call you Wesley, you are an idiot. This is a very well written and interesting solution to the problem set. We have a war on cancer, war on drugs war on terrorism,

war on war so why not a war on disease? I can care less about the other wars for they are stupid and dumb and dumber but to understand how to save lives is what my money should be going towards. so shut your piehole and let the real people talk about solving the problem, okay?

11 months ago

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@the linpo you and Sandy can bake cookies and cakes and then have a fund raiser and sent the money over to Africa.

We don't need to spend the BILLIONS of dollars building isolation centers here and flying people to the USA..

You can take on Ebola WHERE it is occurring.
So if you really care, go there and fix the problem there--with your \$25...

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