

Collaborating for One Health

Tackling Ebola

GHI community confronts deadly disease

With a bi-weekly radio program that told people in his home village in Sierra Leone how to protect themselves and their families, UW-Madison's Alhaji N'jai, a research fellow in the School of Veterinary Medicine who has led Undergraduate Field Courses, made his stand against Ebola.

Fear and grief were never far away, as the Ebola outbreak spread and deaths mounted in the small country where it's easy to know someone who's infected or has died. Faced with the loss of friends and family, N'jai used his radio show to dispell myths and offer practical advice to stop the spread of the disease. "What I want to give them is hope," N'jai said. "Yes, it's a deadly disease, but it's not hopeless."

[Read more.](#)



Students in Sierra Leone make community health maps.

"Ebola very powerfully points out that we live in an integrated world of animals, humans, ecosystems, and infectious agents."

—GHI Acting Director
Christopher Olsen

Trusting science

"My experience taught me, you have to trust science," said **Hannah Kirking**, a UW-Madison alumna, Global Health Graduate Certificate holder, and Epidemic Intelligence Service officer with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She shared her experiences in Liberia during a Global Health Seminar in Madison. Kirking worked with village colleagues to improve local disease surveillance and better understand where Ebola was occurring. Although she knew villagers who died, she trusted that science-based safety rules would keep her safe.

[Read more.](#)



An Ebola burial team works cautiously in Liberia.

“What Ebola makes visible are the fault lines,” said GHI Advisory member **Gregg Mitman**, professor in the Department of Medical History and Bioethics. Those fault lines—of economic, social and health inequities—are clear in Mitman’s film, “In the Shadow of Ebola.”

The film portrays the epidemic through the story of a UW-Madison graduate student’s struggle to bring his family to Wisconsin. GHI provided partial funding for the film.

“Disease is never just about biology,” Mitman says. “This movie offers a personal look inside the Ebola crisis, putting a face on the outbreak and showing how Liberians mobilized to engage and educate communities, and build trust.”

You can [stream the film online at PBS/Independent Lens](#).

[Read more.](#)

“Ebola changed everything”

After nine years, **Janis Tupesis**, director of the Department of Emergency Medicine’s Academic Affairs and Global Health Programs and GHI-Graduate Medical Education liaison, watched Ebola decimate the emergency medicine education training program he helped establish in Liberia.

“Ebola changed everything,” Tupesis said. He is among those returning to Liberia to rebuild medical education. “In a well-trained, well-run infrastructure, it only takes one doctor you trained to say, ‘I think this is Ebola,’ and quarantine that person, and it’s over,” he said. [Read more.](#)

In April, Tupesis and GHI Acting Director **Christopher Olsen** helped brief the Madison (Wisconsin) Committee on Foreign Relations on the long-term implications of Ebola.

Preventing epidemics

GHI Associate Director **Tony Goldberg**, professor of epidemiology in the School of Veterinary Medicine, looks at the impact of human/animal interactions in the spread of diseases like Ebola. Through a series of presentations, Goldberg was key to helping Wisconsinites understand Ebola. He also co-authored a paper in the *Journal of Virology* showing possible benefits of GB-virus-C in survivors.

GHI Advisory member **Yoshihiro Kawaoka**, virologist in the School of Veterinary Medicine, led a team that developed an Ebola whole virus vaccine that effectively protected monkeys.