Inside an Ebola Isolation Unit

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Nurses at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta show the strict precautions in place for workers treating Ebola patients.

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MATT LAUER, anchor:

As Kate just mentioned, questions are being raised about a possible breach in protocol that led to Nina Pham's infection. Caring for a patient with Ebola comes with very strict guidelines for hospital workers. And we saw that firsthand last month when we visited Emory University Hospital in Atlanta where Kent Brantly and Nancy Writebol were successfully treated.

JILL MORGAN: So everything we're doing we're watching each other for safety. As Jason puts on this suit, we just help each other get dressed and undressed in this.

LAUER: At Emory University Hospital, nurses Jill Morgan and Jason Slabaugh showed us the meticulous process of putting on and taking off what they call protective gear.

MORGAN: You can see it's quite a-- it's quite a production.

LAUER: Doubling up on gloves and boots, even wearing a helmet with a built-in fan.

MORGAN: He has got a fan running basically that's pulling air from the environment through a HEPA filter that's giving him a positive airway all the time with a flow of air. So he's never breathing any air from the outside room.

LAUER: The goal?

MORGAN: Protect ourselves from what's in these environments, whether it's the patient and their body fluids and then we're trying to make sure we don't carry any of that contamination out of that room.

LAUER: They're inside the isolation room for up to four hours at a time.

MORGAN: When we are in that room, you are all in, eating, drinking, taking a bathroom break all wait until you can come out of that suit.
LAUER: As an added precaution, outside the isolation room, there's always a second person, suited up as backup for an outside observer, watching for any signs of contamination or for a misstep.
MORGAN: If I see anything that might be dangerous for them, then we're going to interrupt that behavior right away.
LAUER: Leaving isolation and taking off the suits takes just as long, the danger far from over, the risk at its greatest.
MORGAN: Inadvertently, it seems that while trying to maintain your equipment, people actually end up contaminating themselves when they're taking pieces of equipment off.
LAUER: And even after the equipment is off, a three to five-minute shower body scrub.
MORGAN: Everything is important to keep whatever is in this room in this room and keep it from getting out into any part of the environment.
LAUER: Now, in addition to all those steps, anyone who came in contact with the Ebola patients was then monitored for 21 days. But as you can see, it only takes one little mistake and you can be contaminated or exposed to the virus.
NATALIE MORALES: Absolutely. Yeah. It is really scary to think and the levels of caution that they put in place. But still it's still not preventing this.
LAUER: Meantime, one more update on our team that covered the Ebola outbreak in Africa. NBC's chief medical editor Doctor Nancy Snyderman released this statement, quote, "While under voluntary quarantine guidelines, which called for our team to avoid public contact for 21 days, members of our group violated those guidelines and understand that our quarantine is now mandatory until 21 days have passed. We remain healthy and our temperatures are normal. As a health professional, I know that we have no symptoms and pose no risk to the public, but I am deeply sorry for the concerns this episode caused. We're thrilled that Ashoka is getting better and our thoughts continue to be with the thousands affected by Ebola, whose stories we all went to cover."