

# FUTURE WIFE OF BRIT VICTIM

# ON VIRUS AGONY

# My terror as fiancée as fiancée collapsed with Ebola



Battle for life . . . Ashoka Mukpo

**EXCLUSIVE**

From **GRAEME CULLIFORD** and **HUGO DANIEL**, in Omaha, Nebraska

**THE fiancée of a British Ebola victim last night described her anguish and terror as she watched him battle for his life.**

Helen Finlay, 25, could do nothing as future husband Ashoka Mukpo endured horrendous symptoms of the killer disease, which can cause repeated vomiting, high fevers and internal bleeding.

The cameraman – whose mum Lady Diana Judith Mukpo went to school with Princess Anne and now runs a dressage centre in America – had been rushed from Liberia to an isolation unit in the US earlier this month.

Aid worker Helen, of Fowey, Cornwall, told *The Sun* on Sunday: "It was definitely pure terror for the first couple of days. When I heard the word Ebola my stomach dropped. I was sick with worry."

"Ashoka got so ill he could not eat or even drink water. His temperature was dangerously high and his throat so sore he was barely able to talk. I think he experienced some internal bleeding."

**'It's painful to not be able to touch'**

"Although I could speak to him by video phone, it has been unspeakably painful not being able to touch him or give him the support he so obviously needs."

"When you love someone and they are sick you want to be close to them. We obviously cannot do that because he has Ebola."

"The fact I can't be there for Ashoka physically makes me feel very helpless. He has two nurses with him but they're in full protection suits, so it's terrifying."

Ashoka has now "turned a corner" and, although still in isolation, is expected to recover.

Almost 5,000 people have died from Ebola and more than 9,000 have been infected.

Experts compare the epidemic to when Aids swept across Africa.

Ashoka, 33, contracted the disease within a month of landing in Liberia. He flew there on September 3 to film reports on the Ebola crisis for US TV.

He first suspected he had the virus on October 1.

Helen said: "He started to feel weak and achy. I didn't think it was going to be Ebola."

"At first the symptoms are similar to things like malaria. It could have been anything." But Ashoka's



World-class . . . centre where Ashoka is a patient



Vigil . . . Ashoka's mum Diana at press conference

worst fears were confirmed. He spent close to a week in a Liberian isolation tent before his dad – US doctor Mitchell Levy – arranged to have him flown to Nebraska Medical Center's Biocontainment Unit in Omaha.

Helen said: "Ashoka was very scared. We all were. He thought that could be it. He said he loved me and was sorry for putting everybody through this."

"He'd been on the front line reporting on this disease so I knew how bad it could get. He told me I needed to brace myself."

"It was totally incomprehensible

to me. I wasn't prepared to lose the man I love."

Ashoka is thought to have caught Ebola – despite wearing a protective suit – while reporting on conditions at a hospital in the Liberian capital Monrovia.

He had agreed to help disinfect a taxi in which someone showing the symptoms had died.

Helen thinks he contracted the virus when he took off the protective clothing. She said: "Maybe it splashed back on to his clothes."

"You have to take off your equipment with such meticulous care. If you make any slight mistake you risk getting infected." Helen flew

to the US to join Ashoka's mum and dad.

Recalling the moment her fiancé was wheeled into the isolation unit, Helen said: "He had the strength to give us a little wave."

"His mum shouted, 'We love you Ashoka'. I think I burst into tears."

Over the next few days Ashoka suffered his worst symptoms as the virus began to aggressively attack his system. His temperature rocketed to 104°F and he vomited up to 12 times a day.

Ashoka was given a transfusion of blood donated by Dr Kent Brantley, a US missionary who beat Ebola after catching it in Liberia.

The treatment dramatically increases a patient's chances of survival as life-saving antibodies are passed on to them.

Ashoka began to improve at the beginning of this week. Helen said: "He's doing much better, he's becoming more cheerful every day."

"He sounds stronger and believes he'll get better. He's still very weak, but was able to eat some chocolate biscuits the other day."

"There's a Scottish nurse treating him who bought them for him – English digestives."

She added: "Ashoka was very lucky he caught it so early. If you get fluids fast enough the virus



Call for action . . . Helen says more must be done to halt the spread of Ebola



Fighting fit . . . Ashoka with Helen before health disaster

He said he loved me and feared this was it



Hospital dash . . . Ashoka, in white suit and mask, stretchered into ambulance in Omaha

## WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IN EBOLA CRISIS

### HOW IT SPREADS

EBOLA is currently incurable and transmitted by direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person. The virus is generally contagious only when a patient is showing symptoms.

### WHAT TO AVOID

THE Government says there's little chance of getting the virus unless you come in to contact with a sufferer's blood, sweat, saliva, urine, vomit or faeces. But it can remain in a man's semen for two months.

### THE SYMPTOMS

EBOLA can cause fever, chills, muscle aches, headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, sore throat and rash. But unless you have visited West Africa recently, the chance of infection is slim.

### HOW TO GET HELP

IF you fear a loved one has Ebola, call 111 or 999 immediately. Medical staff will tell you if they should go to hospital. Until then, keep the person at home and in minimal contact with others.

### THE TREATMENT

VICTIMS will be placed in intensive care in an isolation unit, tended by nurses in protective suits. Doctors are still working out the best treatment, but experimental drug ZMapp had some success.

should not get as bad as it does for some people. Also, he is getting world-class treatment."

Now she wants the West to do more to fight the crisis. Britain sent a Naval ship to Sierra Leone on Friday, but Helen said: "The international community needs to step up its game."

"The more humans Ebola transmits through, the greater the chance of it mutating. This is why it's important that we don't just stop flights and put up stronger border protections."

"We need to actually act as a world together and stop Ebola."

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## £300k HELP

US TV network NBC this week said it would pay Ashoka's £300,000 medical bill – after he discovered his travel insurance would not.

He went to Liberia with a policy that did not cover "catastrophic events or outbreaks". Helen said: "NBC have been incredibly kind and supportive. It's really good news." Ashoka's pals set up a fundraising website and the £30,000 donated so far will now help him get his life back on track.

All of his belongings had to be destroyed in case they were infected with Ebola – and doctors say it will be at least six months before he can work.

To donate visit [www.gofundme.com/fic8ks](http://www.gofundme.com/fic8ks)