Alumnus Dr. David Blackley Writes Article on Ebola in Liberia

The prevalence of the disease in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea has presented an extreme challenge for the public health systems in these countries. On February 27, 2015, the CDC released a *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (MMWR) titled “Rapid Intervention to Reduce Ebola Transmission in a Remote Village — Gbarpolu County, Liberia, 2014.” The lead author was East Tennessee State University College of Public Health alumnus Dr. David Blackley.

Dr. Blackley was assigned to a rural county that had been heavily affected by Ebola during late summer/early fall. His first deployment was for five weeks during October and November 2014. In the report, Blackley and his associates report that as late as September 14, 2014, Liberia's Gbarpolu County had reported zero cases of Ebola virus disease. On October 25, the Bong County Health Team received confirmation of Ebola in a man who had recently left Geleyansieu, a remote village of approximately 800 residents, after his wife and daughter had died of illnesses consistent with Ebola. Dr. Blackley partnered with the World Health Organization (WHO) and several international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support the county health team with active case finding/investigation, contact tracing, training in safe burials, and Ebola surveillance system evaluation.

He also participated in rapid response activities to investigate and control an outbreak in an isolated village with no access to roads or cellular networks.

David Blackley received a Doctor of Public Health degree from East Tennessee State University in May 2013. He then began a two-year postdoctoral fellowship with the Epidemic Intelligence Service of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. He is assigned to the Division of Respiratory Disease Studies, part of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health which is based in Morgantown, West Virginia. When asked about his time in the College of Public Health, he replied, “During my time at ETSU, mentors gave me lots of autonomy but held my work to high standards -- this helped me develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and writing skills that I use every day as an EIS officer.”

The *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (MMWR) series is prepared by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Often called “the voice of CDC,” the MMWR series is the agency’s primary vehicle for scientific publication of timely, reliable, authoritative, accurate, objective, and useful public health information and recommendations. MMWR readership predominantly consists of physicians, nurses, public health practitioners, epidemiologists and other scientists, researchers, educators, and laboratorians. The data in the weekly MMWR are provisional, based on weekly reports to CDC by state health departments.