Obama: I 'Hugged And Kissed' Nurses Treating Ebola Patients In Atlanta

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President Barack Obama expressed confidence Wednesday that the government's response to the Ebola epidemic will be effective after a meeting with his top cabinet secretaries at the White House.

"The key thing to understand about this disease is these protocols work," Obama said, referring to the government's strategy of identifying, isolating and then monitoring the contacts of people sick with the disease. "We know that because they've been used for decades now."

Concern about the protocols has mounted since two nurses in Dallas became sick after caring for the late Thomas Eric Duncan, the first person to be diagnosed with the disease in the United States. Earlier on Wednesday the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that the second nurse who became infected had violated protocol by traveling aboard a commercial flight the day before she started having symptoms.

Obama said he had no fear of catching Ebola last month when he visited Emory University Hospital in Atlanta, where doctors successfully treated three Americans who'd been infected in Africa.

"I shook hands with, hugged, and kissed, not the doctors, but a couple of the nurses at Emory because of the valiant work that they did," Obama said. "In treating one of the patients, they followed the protocols, they knew what they were doing, and I felt perfectly safe doing so."

National Nurses United, the nation's largest nurses union, claimed in a Tuesday press conference that such protocols weren't in place at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas when Duncan arrived in September. The Centers for Disease Control acknowledged Wednesday that the sick nurses may have contracted Ebola by caring for Duncan without wearing the right protective gear, but the agency said it had redoubled its efforts to ensure health care workers have the right equipment and training.

"If we do these protocols properly, follow the steps, get the information out, then the likelihood of widespread Ebola outbreak in this country are very, very low," Obama said. "But, I think what we've all learned over the last several weeks is that folks here in this country and a lot of nonspecialized hospitals and clinics don't have that much experience dealing with these issues, and so we're going to have to push out this information as aggressively as possible and that's the instructions I've provided to my team."

While Ebola has sickened more than 8,000 people in West Africa, the two Texas nurses are the only people diagnosed with Ebola so far who have contracted the disease in the U.S.