In 2001, an outbreak of Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever in Gabon and the Republic of Congo pulled Dr. Daniel Bausch and other public health professionals away from their homes during the December holidays. Ebola is commonly found in these regions due to the large amount of rainforest still present in those districts, which is likely to be home to the reservoir. Ebola can be very severe and possible cases need to be isolated to prevent spreading the disease. However, defining a case definition for Ebola can be difficult and requires sacrificing sensitivity for specificity to avoid filling the isolation wards with people who do not have Ebola and leaving no room for those who are actually infected. Although Ebola is commonly spread through nosocomial infections, the outbreak in Gabon was associated with family clusters experiencing incubation periods too short to be related to human-to-human transmission. This particular outbreak was determined to be associated with hunting nonhuman primates, which allowed the investigation team to narrow down the case definition. In Gabon, this outbreak and its associated control measures lead to friction between the community and the investigation team. People do not want to be put in isolation and avoid receiving help or reporting cases. The investigation suffered due to these frictions and the lack of trust that the local community had in the team. The 2001 outbreak of Ebola in Gabon taught the team important lessons about building trust within the local community, as well as appreciating the importance of nonhuman primates in the transmission of Ebola.
Questions for Discussion:

- What makes Gabon and the Republic of Congo hotspots for Ebola?
- What is a nosocomial infection and how does it play a role in Ebola outbreaks?
- What is an isolation ward and what kind of stigma is associated with it in the African communities?
- How are cases of Ebola confirmed in the laboratory? What are some problems associated with this?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of having laboratory confirmation of a case before beginning the investigation?
- What are some of the problems related to preventing these outbreaks in Gabon and other African countries?
- What problems does the team encounter with the case definition?
- What made this particular outbreak unique?
- What kinds of challenges were associated with the outbreak? How could they have prevented some of the problems? What did they learn from this experience?
- How did you feel about Dr. Bausch’s decision about the boy’s diagnosis? What kinds of things did he consider when he made the diagnosis? Do you think his personal life affected his decision?
- What are some difficulties associated with this type of work on a personal level?
- What kind of tips does Dr. Bausch give us about working in an outbreak? Do these tips correspond with the other outbreaks we’ve discussed in class?
- What do you think about Dr. Bausch’s frustrations with his CDC job and his decision to pursue a career in academia? Do you think this happens often in that field?
- What part of the chapter stood out most to you? Why?