

BSSH Team Visit to Holy Spirit Hospital Masuba, Sierra Leone
27 July to 2nd Aug 2013

Two member team consisting of an anaesthetist and a plastic surgeon left from Gatwick at 11:30 morning on Saturday the 27th by Gambia Bird flight to reach Freetown in the evening same day around 17:30. Amadu the field officer from the hospital was there to receive us and after a three hour drive dropped us in the accommodation; the guest house managed jointly by the Don Gnocchi Foundation and the Hospital.

Rose the 'resident nursing officer' appraised us next morning about the inpatients from the mission just finished and those from earlier interventions. Two patients who had external fixators for lower limb fractures in June needed hospitalization to facilitate recovery. Others were recovering from skin grafts applied to feet and legs. There were no immediate concerns but needed continued care. Rose being there has brought changes in the care and management of patients both in the outpatient consultations and inpatient treatment. There were outreach screening sessions to select patients for this visit who attended the clinic.

I spend most of the Monday in the outpatients whereas Dr. Bhandari familiarised with the equipment. I saw twenty eight patients for consultation on Monday and only four on subsequent days to minimize interruptions during operating sessions. We operated on seventeen cases consisting of the following:

Excision synovial swelling thumb

Child with post burn contracture for release and skin graft hand

Debridement and skin grafts to lower limbs

Post burn neck contracture for release and skin graft

Debulking upper eyelid neurofibroma and correction upper lid eversion

Excision lipoma, neck, trunk, back, shoulder

Keloid excision / steroids inj

Ex SCC ? Marjolin's Ulcer post anal area and repair with a transposition flap

We had to defer the following cases for a future team:

One year old Child with cleft of Lip and primary palate

Bilateral leg ulcers for skin graft

Six year old child with post burn contracture hand

There were patients beyond the scope of surgical intervention, such as cases with cerebral palsy, hemiparesis, developmental problems of speech, gait who were referred to the physio. There were cases like hernias, hydrocoele, which currently receive treatment but have to pay.

The infrastructure in the country has changed in a short space of time. The road from the airport to Makeni is good and the mission in Lunghi where we stopped overnight in the past has moved its staff to Makeni and father Pero now leads the team in the town. Main electric power supply is available though it requires supplementation from the generator in the hospital from time to time. The hospital has acquired new vehicles and a brand new regional hospital has been built in Makeni. This new hospital has opened its beds for women and children. It may be a while to achieve the right staff and materials to function to its high ideals. The Makeni town is in the process of transforming itself into a city, there are more eateries and hotels are in the making.

It seems that networking with volunteer organizations like Re Surge Africa, Don Gnocchi Foundation and other like minded groups is necessary for the future projects. Some of the consumables like dressing materials and gloves etc would need stocking up and sources for regular replacement sought with the ongoing missions. Dr Turay is going on Sabbatical leave and Do Gnocchi Foundation no longer funding the guest house facilities.

We could not undertake more cases needing skin grafts due to the paucity of non adherent dressings of some kind to apply to the graft recipient and donor sites. We did look around in our stocks both adjacent to the theatre and the store room near the new physio department; a challenge for the teams planning the forthcoming visits. Lack of consumables like the **non adherent dressing material and gloves** is a restricting factor. John has been using his home made Vaseline Gauze in the outpatients.

I am grateful to the BSSH for sponsoring our visit and thank all my colleagues who helped to carry out the duties during the visit. Dr. Bhandari, the consultant anaesthetist was very helpful and understanding during the mission.

Nanak Sarhadi – Consultant Plastic Surgeon