

Hand Trauma Workshop (BSSH/WOC) Malawi 24th September 2015

The BSSH were approached via WOC to help with a one day Hand Trauma Workshop preceding the annual Malawian Orthopaedic Association Meeting at Mangochi on the 25th-26th September 2015. The request had come from Linda Chokotho who is the only Hand Surgeon in Malawi and works at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the Beit Cure Hospital in Blantyre, Malawi.

During the 4 weeks before leaving for Malawi, we developed a lecture programme with Linda (ref.1), some videos were prepared for practical demonstrations and an evaluation sheet printed (Ref.2) Jill Arrow-Smith, Consultant Hand Surgeon at Derby very kindly contributed some presentations from the Derby "Assessment of the Injured Hand Course" which proved to be very appropriate. Fortunately we did not require a visa; so we updated our vaccinations bought some antimalarial tablets.

On Monday 21st September Bo Polvsen and I travelled out on an overnight flight via Nairobi to Malawi, to help with the Hand Trauma workshop. We arrived in Lilongwe on Tuesday 22nd September, the capital of Malawi and were met by Mercy on behalf of the Charity "Feet First" who kindly had arranged accommodation. Mercy also arranged the provision of an excellent driver Kennedy for our stay.

The following day before travelling down to Mangochi, we took the opportunity to visit the Public Hospitals in Lilongwe. This gave us some useful background to the clinical workload faced by the OCOs, the available resources and their level of knowledge. Kennedy then drove us with 2 OCOs along the Mozambique border, via some highlands and down to Mangochi on Lake Malawi to meet Linda Chokotho, the day before the Workshop.

One initial set back was the failure of a suitcase to arrive at Lilongwe, which contained all the materials for the workshop! We had our Laptops and memory sticks with CD copies of the videos in our hand luggage. So all the lectures were covered, but the workshops were a key part of the day, so we had to spend some time acquiring other materials, as a standby. Fortunately the suitcase, which had been held up in Nairobi arrived via a tortuous route in the hands of one of the delegates on the day of the Workshop!

On the day 22 delegates attended, as there were 3 who cancelled the day before because their Hospitals could not cover their work commitments. This was disappointing as the course was oversubscribed and Linda had a reserve list of 10 OCOs who were keen to attend. The venue was the conference hall in the Boadzulu resort, near Mangochi on the shores of Lake Malawi, known as "the lake of stars". The venue was ideal for the workshop and the hotel staff were happy to adapt to the timings of our program as regards refreshments and helpful with arranging the practicals (e.g bowls of water for the POSI POP Practical).

The presentations were delivered using an old Toshiba laptop with a projector and we had no significant AV problems to speak of. The workshops were held in the Conference room and on the veranda in small groups on a rotating program. The OCOs were keen and attentive and showed a reasonable knowledge of basic Orthopaedics. They had a good understanding of Fracture healing and the principles of conservative treatment of Fractures of long bones including Paediatrics. However we felt that their knowledge of Hand Trauma was somewhat lacking.

Linda Chokotho coordinated the day superbly well and her lectures were well received. Bo and I adapted the programme a little, omitting distal radius fractures and some complex injuries in the interests of time. We found therefore that the Lectures given were appropriate and we concentrated on the basic principles only with an emphasis on which cases to refer. The temperature was about 30 degrees, and although dry we kept the lectures short and interactive to keep the delegates engaged, particularly after Lunch! The OCOs found the practicals beneficial for learning new techniques, informative regarding clinical scenarios and they were fun!

We also formally discussed clinical cases (brought by the delegates) in the lecture theatre, in addition to our own, although some were based on simple X-ray, which we could not project. Overall the workshop was an ambitious program covering Anatomy, assessment, diagnosis, Radiology and management of Hand Injuries (including fractures, tendon ruptures, infection and burns) to deliver in one day. A follow up training day is highly recommended. It may be that future courses can focus on specific areas of treatment. One idea is to for the faculty to hold the same course in 2 venues (Lilongwe and Mangochi) within the same week to help reach more OCOs. We stayed on in Mangochi for 2 nights to the Annual MOA meeting and contributed to the Paediatric Upper Limb Fractures session in the Case discussion sessions.

In summary the Hand Trauma workshop seems to have been a success, as evidence by the positive feedback (ref. 2). The excellent collaboration with Linda and the senior OCOs worked well and it is hoped that the educational experience was worthwhile for all concerned. Bo Polvsen and I certainly felt privileged to be there and we left feeling enriched and encouraged for the future. It was most helpful having the links in Lilongwe for the arrival and departure from Malawi. Finally, our sincere thanks must go to Linda Chokotho for her vision, her determination and courage in proposing this venture and for her strength Leadership and collaboration on the day.