

Uganda Supporters Newsletter

Issue 2

August 2002

Thanks to all our supporters

Kate and Lesley want to express our heartfelt thanks to all of you who supported our fundraising efforts to make a difference to perioperative nurses in Uganda.

We raised enough money to fund the visit, to provide gifts (nurses scissors, eye protection and surgical instruments) for all the participants and there is a little left over to seed our visit next year.....more of that later.



Uganda 2002

The plan for this years' visit was somewhat different to the course we ran last year, in Kampala. We visited two hospitals in the regions and also Mulago University Teaching Hospital in Kampala. Once again the students traveled, and we met up with most of those who attended, last year, in one venue or another. It was especially good to visit the hospitals and to teach in their surroundings, as we were really able to understand the difficulties they wrestle with on a daily

basis. It was particularly pleasing to see areas of improvement gained by lessons learned last year, now in place. Mbarara Theatres, had made particularly good progress and implemented a great deal of positive change.

We undertook a clinical audit of each theatre area, which has been feedback to the Ugandan Department of Health, who assisted with cost sharing and local arrangements.

Standards of practice

The practice we observed, shocked us even though we had heard about it last year. The buildings leak, resources are scarce and money runs out by tenth day in the fiscal month. Patients are expected to clamber onto the operating table themselves, despite being in appalling pain. Recovery often takes place for a minimal time and patients are returned to the ward, where their bed may be on the floor. One hospital reported bed numbers regularly as two thirds oversubscribed!

Swabs were regularly washed and hung on the line to dry, despite rampant HIV. Nurses washed all the laundry and spent many hours ironing drapes and masks before sterilizing them in drums in autoclaves that looked like enormous pressure cookers.

One nurse explained that his hospital, in a

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remote rural area on the eastern border with Rwanda, had had no electricity for months, because they could not afford to replace the £400 battery. We could not imagine even trying to run a hospital without electricity!

Continuing support

Last year we identified some potential leaders amongst the students and we were able to meet up with each of them to supply particular support and encouragement, in 2002. We would really like to ensure that they have continuing education via the internet from us, but the Ministry who were sourcing funds to purchase laptops have not been able to do this. We continue to support them by post and hope that funds can be raised, in future for this purpose.



Practice and Theory

We spent time in the operating theatres in each hospital as well as re-enforcing theoretical teaching from last year. One very popular topic was infection control, which we were able to focus onto areas that we had observed were in need of information to develop practice. A further topic which generated much participation was managing challenging people. We learned that gender difficulties, the position of nurses in the community and tribal hierarchies make change in some hospitals very difficult for nurses to drive. Plus ca change!

Sustainable change for Ugandan Theatres

The Ministry of Health is very supportive of our plans to encourage change from within the country, by supporting further education.



Our plan is to run a final course next year, for the brightest of our students and to focus on change management, managerial topics and to ensure that 'trainers' are available in Perioperative nursing. This should ensure a network within Uganda of well informed theatre nurses who are in a position to assist others. We will be able to support some of them with continuing help (such as journals and articles, by post.)

Thanks

Thanks are due to everyone who helped and supported our Mission to Uganda. We feel that with your help we have been able to make some real change, and there is more to come!

Newsletter compiled by Kate Woodhead.

Email: periop@cwcom.net

Photographs: Kate Woodhead