

Visit to The Gambia April 2011

Hussain M. Alnajjar

Period of Visit: 1 week.

I am extremely grateful to Mr George Fowlis and Professor James N'Dow and their family and friends for making this trip an unforgettable experience.

Personnel

- 1- Mr George Fowlis- North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust
- 2- Professor James N'Dow- Aberdeen Royal Infirmary
- 3- Mr Sam McClinton- Aberdeen Royal Infirmary
- 4- Mr Mohammed Hammadeh- Queen Elizabeth Hospital NHS Trust
- 5- Dr Rim Al-Rifaie (Paediatrician)- Epsom and St Helier Hospitals NHS Trust
- 6- Mr Hussain M. Alnajjar- St George's Healthcare NHS Trust
- 7- Frances Murray (scrub nurse) – Aberdeen Royal Infirmary
- 8- Janet Walker (scrub nurse)- Aberdeen Royal Infirmary

Background

The Gambia is known as the 'smiling coast', which is a good description of its very hospitable and friendly people.

It is a small country in West Africa, with a population of approximately 1.5 million.

The Gambia has very few natural resources and most of its earnings come from groundnuts and tourism. The Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital (RVTH) is in the capital of The Gambia, Banjul. It has recently become a Teaching Hospital and just begun to train its own medical students. RVTH has 540 beds and provides Primary Healthcare for Central Banjul through its Polyclinic.

RVTH is funded primarily by the Gambian Government but is semi-autonomous with its own board and management team.

Equipment

As requested by Dr Abubakar Jah from Urolink, I was given the privilege of taking a number of instruments donated by Urolink to the RVTH. The instruments included a resectoscope, rigid ureteroscope and many other essential equipment. I arranged for the equipment to be packed professionally in a box weighing 40kg in total. Furthermore, I prepared a letter from Urolink, which when I presented to the airline, was waived from any cargo charges. Mr Nick Watkin kindly provided all the equipment from the Urolink store according to the request list devised by Dr Jah.

After assessing the theatres, I would say RVTH now possesses a fair amount of equipment mainly donated by Urolink over the years. Unfortunately, the

equipment are not well maintained and seem to mainly be used during Urolink visits. Their resectoscope is becoming old and RVTH are in need of a new resectoscope that was provided to them on this visit.

Operating theatre conditions were poor. This required significant input from sisters Frances and Janet to clean, sterilise, organise and assemble the equipment to start operating. Sisters Frances and Janet spent a significant amount of time teaching nurses and students how to assemble, sterilise and store the equipment.

Our Work

A typical day started at around 8am with theatre starting at 9-9:30am. Available theatres were divided into Th1 for endoscopic procedures mainly consisting of TURP's and optical urethrotomy and Th2 for open cases consisting of open prostatectomy, urethroplasty and vesicovaginal fistula repair. In total, we operated on 15 patients. I was informed that this year we did not operate on as many patients as previous years mainly due to inadequate number of prepared patients. I found staff not very interested or keen except for Dr Jah who genuinely wanted to make a change. He is facing the challenge of being the only person with vision and aspiration. Finally, I had some opportunity to teach the junior doctors basic urology in small group.

This was truly an invaluable experience unique to developing nations.

Extra-Curricular Activities

We were able, after a hard workday by the entire team, to enjoy time spent by the pool in the lovely weather. Professor N'Dow's and Dr Jah's families invited us to dinner. This gave us the opportunity to bond and better understand the Gambian way of living, culture and hospitality.

Future Work

I will visit The Gambia again with Urolink visit and hope to contribute further in teaching medical students and nurses. I hope to stay for a longer period of time in order to maximise my experience and input.

Group photo Left to Right- Mr Hammadeh, Mr McClinton, Mr Fowlis, Professor N'dow, Myself



During a Millin's Prostatectomy- Left to right- Scrub nurse Fatou, Myself, Cuban Anaesthetist, Mr Hammadeh