

Visit report	
Country visited	Ethiopia
Institution or workshop	Paediatric surgery Black Lion Hospital Addis Ababa
Dates of visit	22nd February 2023
Team members	Ram Subramaniam (RS) Steve Payne (SP)

Scoping visit

Background

RS was passing through Addis on his way to a paediatric workshop in Lilongwe, and SP was on his way back from Hawassa before going off to Lilongwe as well. It seemed an ideal time to try and sublimate a plan, that had arisen 5 years previously, to try and help the paediatric surgeons in Ethiopia with some aspects of paediatric urology. RS's plan had fallen into abeyance because of Covid and a change in staffing in Ethiopia. The original plan had germinated in Hawassa, but as there is only one paediatric surgeon there and it seemed logical to provide help where there was the largest aggregation of paediatric surgeons; this is in Addis at the Black Lion Hospital which has 7 general surgical paediatric consultants, a paediatric surgical fellowship and residency programmes in the specialty.

Ethiopia is a country of 120 million people, 50% of whom are under 14 years of age. There are 40 paediatric surgeons in the country with approximately one half of them being in Addis. 60% of all operative paediatric surgery is on urological pathology. There are formal training links with paediatric surgical departments in Vellore and Toronto. Apart from sporadic teaching visits there is no formal out-reach exchange programme for trainees and no in-reach programme from either India or Canada.

Currently, there is no sub-specialization within paediatric surgery in Ethiopia and, bearing in mind the patient load, there is a definite need for practical help in-country. The Black Lion has an intention to develop sub-specialists in three areas, urology, colorectal surgery, and oncology, and has already formalized a fellowship programme in urology.

Black Lion is an 800-bed referral hospital which sees approximately 370,000-400,000 patients a year. The emergency department sees around 80,000 patients a year. The hospital has 169 specialists, 65 non-teaching doctors, 25 fellows, 500 Residents, 1396 medical students and 99 Interns. There are eight major operating theatres and paediatric surgery is carried out every day of the working week. The hospital is the largest teaching hospital for Addis Ababa University, School of Medicine and in Ethiopia.



Black Lion Hospital Addis Ababa (Courtesy of Tikur Anbessa)

The meeting

We were really fortunate, and honoured, to be able to meet with Dr. Woubedel Kiflu, who is the current head of paediatric surgery and Professor Miliard Derbew who is a past head of that department and a former president of COSECSA. We discussed what the Ethiopian needs were, and how Urolink's model of assisting may be of benefit. We emphasized that Urolink's paradigm was to help with practical, often hands-on surgical, education in a specialist area, utilizing the linked centre as a focus for dissemination of experience to a larger community in the region. We also stated that Urolink's aim was not simply to come and do difficult cases but, in the main, to assist the local surgeons develop surgical expertise in those areas of particular technical/clinical need. These principles were thought to be agreeable to both parties.



Ram, Prof Miliard, Steve, and Dr. Woubedel at the Black Lion Hospital February 2023

The specific paediatric urological needs in Ethiopia

The practical needs for help in Addis, in order of importance are:

- 1) Starting the sub-specialty programs
- 2) Workshops and training in endourology and minimal invasive surgery via face to face and regular virtual sessions
- 3) Pediatrics Endourology equipment
- 4) Mentorship support for our fellows
- 5) Sharing of some teaching material access (journals, books...)

and the most important clinical problems requiring assistance, in order of importance are:

- 1) Posterior urethral valve ablation/ resection
- 2) Bladder exstrophy-epispadias repair
- 3) neurogenic bladder surgical management
- 4) Hypospadias repair
- 5) Urethral stricture management (Urethroplasty)
6. Laparoscopic orchidopexy

A very specific need, for this tertiary referral centre, is for a paediatric resectoscope so that posterior urethral valves can be treated endoscopically.

Agreements

After this very informative, and cordial, meeting it was agreed that:

- There is a need for a formal link between Urolink and the Black Lion Hospital for paediatric urology.
- There is a need for help with developing operative skills for the fellowship programme.
- There is a need to assist in disseminating paediatric urologists to a wider domain.

Steps forward

From this very solid base it was suggested that the following things could be useful to getting this planned link in place:

- For SP to provide links, and for Dr. Woubedel to look at the Urolink website and see it's model of how it has helped other centers.
- For this scoping document to act as a formal proposal for a link between Urolink and the Black Lion Hospital utilizing the Leeds teaching Hospitals Trust as its main link.
- For SP to present the proposal to the BAUS Urolink Committee in March of 2023.
- If ratified, for there to be a formal document linking the two organisations.

It was also suggested that the following actions take place if the link is endorsed:

- For there to be an open line of communication between Dr. Woubedel, Dr Tihitena and RS.

- For there to be an online paediatric surgical webinar series, developed between Leeds and Addis, with a programme devised by RS in liaison with our Ethiopian colleagues to enhance preliminary linking at senior and junior levels. SP to ensure that BAUS will support this using its Zoom account and will help in archiving recorded material on an open access platform for bi-directional benefit.
- For RS to contact Dr. Woubedel with regard to their level of instrumentation, peripheral instrumentation for laparoscopy and to get some idea of the operative setup prior to a formal visit.
- For there to be a plan for an operative paediatric urological workshop in Addis in March 2024.

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23rd February 2023