

Urolink trip to Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique 2008

This visit was with Jaimin Bhatt a trainee from the Oxford rotation who is a Kenyan Indian wishing to return to the continent of his birth, mainly to get open urology experience. We travelled on Kenya Airways to Lusaka on 2nd November. I must recommend this airline as it is one of the least expensive and good. The in flight entertainment was Mamma Mia, Piecre 007 Brosnan's singing for heavens sake was ludicrous!

3rd -8th November

Rest day on the 3rd after loss of sleep travelling. Then on the 4th we did a good ward round for the cases for the rest of the week. There is amazing clinical material but I am still sad at the delay in operating. They wait 2 months for histology before proceeding to cystectomy even with untreated bilateral hydronephrosis. Then there was a huge clinic. Jaimin and I were working together with a nurse as interpreter. The M.ECSA candidates, 10 in all from here, all met me for a rehearsal of the examinations to be held in Maputo at the end of the month. I had the help from one of the neurosurgeons to drill them on neuroanatomy and used Jaimin's body for surface anatomy. These rehearsals are going on all week.

We had great difficulty getting money out of the bank, as we are not a Barclay's premier customers and the cash point (card eaten). Met up with Prof Krikor in the evening for a meal at the Labib's. He is now almost retired from surgery he has been appointed registrar of COSECSA this will suit his organisational abilities to a tee. Excellent list on Wednesday with an open prostate and a total cystectomy, both of which were done with Jaimin assisting. I showed them how to do a Mainz 11 (again). I slept as tired during the day, very hot and I had had a nightmare the previous night that I was being stalked. Chance would be a fine thing, I believe it is the atenolol that gives me nightmares.

More exam rehearsals and then a visit to the internet café plus replacement of isotonic fluid for the non TT amongst us. Amazing thunderstorm which I missed as asleep at 8.p.m. My it was hot and humid.



Jaimin and John Kachimba doing adult hypospadias repair

During this week Jaimin has also done; hypospadias repair in an adult, open removal bladder stone, one more open prostate, a revision of a caecostomy into a double barrelled transverse colostomy for an RVF, the patient also has a VVF, twice repaired unsuccessfully (and whom we are taking to Monze next week) and an open nephrostomy. The lists are slow there is a shortage of sterilized instruments and patients eat breakfast on their operation day, so we are taking in all 4 cases to Monze where the turnover is usually better and the staff will work in the afternoon.

The Labib's hospitality is as usual great. Jaimin in staying in Fairacre lodge which is clean and reasonable. We both took the family to the Lusaka Club for a meal on thursday and I went to the firework display at Ahmed's school, very good on Friday. On Friday. Jaimin had disappeared by bus to go to Livingston to bungee jump, the fool.

Sunday 9th November to 14th

I set off for Monze by bus in the evening and slept through the bus stop , my alarm did not go off, and ended up in Choma, 100km further along, so had to a very wonky taxi back for \$100. Still arrived safe at 2.30 am. Jaimin and Michael Breen had spent the evening doing burr holes on a young lad who was involved in an RTA he did well from the operation but died of ventilation problems, no ventilators here.

The next day we started operating. Jaimin had a great week he was taught how to do a VVF, he did an open prostactectomy and open removal of bladder stone. Michael did a great repair on the lass who had both a VVF and RVF, done at the same sitting, and I did an anastomotic repair of the stricture on the man who had travelled from Lusaka.

There was a child who came in with a snake bite to his face he was wonderfully intubated, but died on the way to UTH Lusaka of the effects of the venom. There was another man fell out of a tree, mango picking season, who died of a tension pneumothorax as he was inadequately managed by the junior doctors. He was left for 1 and half hours without anyone putting a wide bore needle in his chest, they could not find a chest drain. Jaimin gave a talk to the medics on the management of trauma, at 7am which I missed due to needing my sleep. It was apparently excellent and somewhat critical in view of the previous days debacle



Christine doing her final operation ever [pyelolithotomy] with Michael Breen and Michael Thompson in Monze

After Jaimin left for Kenya to visit his family I did my last operation ever after 42 years, a pyelolithotomy. I enjoyed it but I am not sad to leave operating I have been doing it for years and so no regrets

Saturday 15th November to 22nd

Off by bus to Livingstone. The roads for the last 60 miles are appalling but are being retarmaced, slowly. Took a taxi to the border and found I had lost my UK sim card at Vic Falls, what a nuisance. It was in my bumbag, loose, as my phone would not work from the UK so had a Zambian sim card in it. They have changed their provider from Zamtel to Zian. Still, I emailed Ruth to cancel it. Vic Falls is still a haven for tourists and there were plenty, all using US\$ or SA rands. Managed with some difficulty to get a 1st class couchette, I only had an economy ticket but the train inspector would not let me go in the ordinary carriage he said I would be robbed at knifepoint. I was put in with 3 women who were returning with 30 loaves of white sliced bread amongst many other things, to barter in Bulawayo, so the carriage was packed especially with my 2 suitcases. Happy people but in dire straits. The train was even smellier than last year and the corridor door onto the track would not close so was open all night. The journey took 14 hours. I was met by Hassan Ashmawy who was delighted to see me.. I had had reports that the hospitals were closed, the doctors and nurses were on strike their pay is = to half a US\$ per month and they cannot afford to travel to work. They were open for emergencies. The private hospital Mater Dei had 2 wards open and operating was being done.

I spent the 5 days giving basic science lectures to the first clinical students in the new medical school. 12 in all very bright and enthusiastic. So we did clinical physiology.. I was prewarned by the now Prof Enweren, the second urologist who is in charge of the clinical programme. He struggles to find lecturers, there is no general surgeon now in Bulawayo government service. Being prewarned, Prof Labib had given me his courses for the trainee surgeons, aren't laptops and flash discs a boon.



The 4th year medical students in the new Bulawayo Medical School with Prof Enweren



The unlicensed cars in Mpilo Hospital kindly provided for the senior doctors and administrators by Robert Mugabe



Hassan Ashmawy still able to operate in the private Mater Dei Hospital

We saw a patient, on the almost empty wards, with an extremely well managed tension pneumothorax, so they are doing better than in Zambia. I also used my last Caverject injections to give a young man, with a membranous urethral stricture, his first erection for 3 years and a small supply for home. He was delighted but where to get some more from I have no idea.

The senior doctors and management have been given unlicensed brand new cars as a bribe from Robert Mugabe to stay in the country working. I would take one as well. The Chinese are now here in the country in force as well.

So a pleasant week with great hospitality of the Ashmawys and friends. We ate well despite the lack of food in the shops, the water was on this year but not for all people. The local kids were drinking from the puddles in the road, as torrential rains came. I met up with Washington Sansole, my judge friend, for a drink at the Holiday Inn. He says Mugabe considers himself immortal.

The queues at the banks were miles long as you can only take out 500,000 Zim dollars out a day, worth half a US\$. They are short of paper to print the currency. Hassan is going to Maputo for the COSECSA meeting so we spent time making his presentation for the meeting and also ready for publication in Urology. It is on tunica vaginalis for substitution urethroplasty. He has had a great deal of support from Chris Chapple and Barbagli himself and is a good paper performed under difficult circumstances. Hope it gets accepted in Urology. The long distance buses have been curtailed from lack of money so I flew out of Bulawayo to Harare



Christopher Samkange and Victoria outside their house, under construction, in Harare

Saturday 22 November to 28th

Christopher Samkange had just come back from Ireland where he had been for the previous week with Mohammed Labib, invited by the Irish College to be observers in the MRCS examinations. Excellent idea for the COSECSA examinations, especially as we will be running the first F Urol in Maputo.

No surgery being done in Harare teaching hospitals either, except emergencies up to 7pm after that nothing. Met Bob Lane on the Monday He is the Rahima Dawood lecturer this year so is moving around teaching and lecturing prior to going to Maputo. He gave an excellent and well attended lecture on colorectal cancer and we had a good drink and a natter. Chris S had a patient who had fallen off a ladder puncturing his lower abdomen with a metal paling. He could not get the theatre to stay open in the teaching hospital. So the patient had to go home to raise enough money to go to St Annes privately. Then Chris spent much of the evening/night repairing the man's ruptured bladder and urethra, with no blood. None available. The patient has survived [although a bit pale after, Hb5]

I spent wednesday and thursday taking the one Zimbabwean candidate and other trainees through examination technique for the membership examinations. No water this week except for 3 hours on Wednesday when I had a cold shower. I became expert in strip washing an art I learnt in boarding school, in the 50s.

We went to a carol concert at the girls' school, Arundale, which was a truly good experience, a traditional ' Nine Lessons and Carols ' and the end of term concert 2 days later, where the oldest daughter Nyari played the marimbas. There were 6 in all, with 11 other 15year old girls playing.. What talent. What normality amongst all this mayhem.

Victoria's (Christopher's wife) mother was very unwell during the week with much travelling to and fro, to hospitals, with empty petrol tanks. She died sadly 2 weeks later, after Christopher had returned from Maputo, very sad as she was not that elderly. We have now found out that Christopher's tank can travelled 400km after it registers empty.

There was cholera in Harare. I had lunch with Prof Kent Johnsonn (Swedish]) and his wife, the cousin of his house girl had died 2 days before. The reason was the lack of water or at least the chemicals for sterilization. Robert Mugabe has denied there was cholera or any problems. By the end of my stay there were 400 recorded deaths. There had been set up 2 camps to isolate the patients run by MSF and Red Cross/Crescent

28th November – 6th December.

Off to Maputo via Jo'burg.. Due to my Diners card I could get into the Premier lounge and had my first hot shower for 8 days. Brilliant I felt clean at last.. I love Jo'burg airport they have a smokers lounge with a bar and TV and it is civilised. Christopher lost his luggage by the time we arrived in Maputo. The team from Kenya with Prof Jani and Steve Ogendo were held up with aeroplane problems in Lilongwe. They were the main exam organisers, so the next day I set off with Dr Mapasse to sort out the patients for the Membership exam. Labib came as well to sort out the urology cases with Igor Vas for Tuesday, brilliant cases as usual

The amount of rubbish in the streets was awful and the begging troublesome but otherwise the hotel was fine, 3 Star clean and a good breakfast. The whole week was good, the exams ran well, mostly, but I was not happy about the format. We had stirring help from Kirsty Muir from the Edinburgh College, Margaret Bean ex of the college now on loan to COSECSA in Arusha, to help with the organization. John Orr RCSEd president was there and also the Irish College president. As usual Lindsey Stewart, George Borthwick and wife Millie and Denis Robson were in force from Ethicon and they were as usual generous with their hospitality. Ruth, my daughter, arrived on the Sunday for the week and went off on safari to Kruger park, just over the border in South Africa with 2 Canadian orthopaedic surgeons who had come to help with the orthopaedic workshop and the Fellowship exams in orthopaedics. I ran my usual Train the Examiners meeting, the standard is not bad but there are still too many surgeons who like to hear their own voices. The Membership exams had a good pass rate BUT at last we are being more particular about the standard in the Fellowship exams. There was a much lower pass rate except in the Urology both candidates passed but they were fairly senior and certainly up to speed and date with information. Bob Lane was great as usual he was the external examiner for the general surgery fellowship.

Two highlights of the week,

Hassans's paper on TV urethroplasty was well given and I got a present from the COSECSA council as they all knew I'm, at last, retiring

Bless me if Jimmy James didn't give a short citation for me. I gave his when he got his Honorary Fellowship of the Edinburgh College 6 years ago, so all square.



Christine receiving her gift and citation from Prof Jimmy James

Only irritating note my laptop was stolen from the hotel room on the Wednesday after I had finished using it for the exams. I spent over 2 days, an interesting 9 hours in Maputo police stations trying to get a report, so I can claim on my insurance.

Then I went back home after an interesting 5 weeks. I felt that the troubles in Africa far out weigh anything we have in the UK so credit crunch and the closing of Woolworths has left me unmoved.

I shall miss them all but I feel I have done my best and I am happy to leave younger people like Jaimin to help out in future to keep up the contacts. So over to you Jaimin.

Costs and Thanks

Fares to Lusaka return £510 paid for by Urolink

All hospitality free thanks to Labibs, Michael. Breen and the delightful Fallus, the Ashmawys and the Samkanges.

Visas Zambia now a monstrous £75. Zimbabwe only \$50 likewise Mozambique Hotel in Maputo £300, unfortunately I don't qualify for repayment by COSECSA as I am not on council but they did give me \$200 as an examiner.

Thanks to Darren Speed DHL for sending the boxes of equipment over.

Thanks to Jaimin for his company and enthusiasm

Thanks to Prof Jani for replenishing my cigarillo supply from the duty free in Nairobi I was never without smokes this visit. Nor whisky come to think of it.

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