

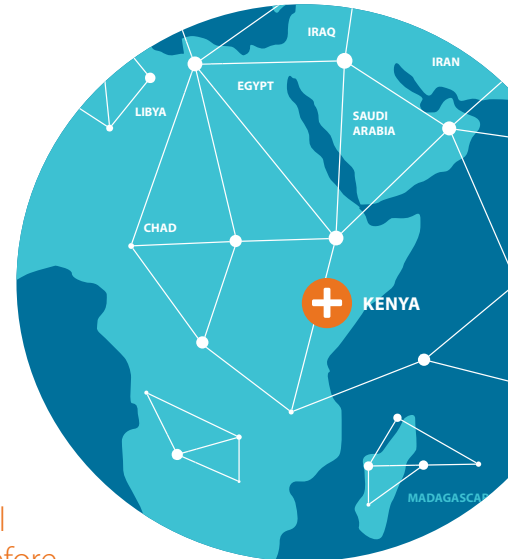
Elective Grant Report



Arriving at Nairobi airport with 100kg of medical donations

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Kenya is where my motivation for medicine began and my interest in plastic surgery has grown. Over the past ten years I have been volunteering in rural Kenya as an Occupational Therapist and Hand Therapist, and it was therefore fitting that I return for my final medical elective. I was supervised by a local Plastic Surgeon, Dr Oduor. His passion for surgery, reconstructing burns contractures and congenital deformities is admirable.

Landing in Nairobi with over 60 kilograms of medical supplies is always interesting, with my bag marked "X" I knew I was a customs target. Following negotiation, I passed through avoiding the incoming "tax" on donated goods. I travelled to Nakuru via car, approximately four hours north-west of Nairobi. I met Nancy who hosted me at Moi Flats, a 30 minute walk from the hospital. Walking was humid, but safe in daylight and an opportunity for many greetings such as "habari yako" (how are you?), "morning" and "jambo muzungu" (hello white person). On Sunday I went to a colourful church service with many orphan girls attending and on Monday I started at the hospital.

Rift Valley General Provincial Hospital

The Rift Valley General Provincial Hospital is the fourth largest government hospital in Kenya. Although it has 600 beds, it operates at 120 percent capacity. This was evident on the male orthopaedic ward with patients sharing beds, their exposed bones and external fixations almost tangled with one another. The many "tib-fib" fractures, along with the degloving injuries I debrided, steered me well away from riding on the back of any "piki pikis" (motorbikes). On day one I was straight into the trainee surgical lectures on burns and assisting in theatre to debride and graft burn injuries. I slowly realised there simply wasn't enough theatre time or resources to treat patients and their extensive burns. With the exception of children under five, patients had to pay hospital costs. Caregivers were asked to take the script to the pharmacy in town to purchase simple medications such as antibiotics, often resulting in delayed treatment. On arrival one morning I was asked to confirm the death of a two year old girl with facial burns, which was both shocking and difficult.

There was one physiotherapist for four surgical wards. After hours, I did therapy, including positioning and splinting of the patients. My time with the physiotherapy and medical students was limited, instead my time was spent empowering patients to do therapy and displaying resources from my work at Alfred Hospital Burns Unit. In clinics, I was emptying out my backpack of donated dressings and burn compression garments. Interesting cases included chronic ulcers, neglected hand trauma and lower limb nerve palsies secondary to mistakes in administration of injections in the buttock of children. Due to Kenya having recently introduced the NHIF insurance scheme available to poorer Kenyan families with small weekly payments, clinic volumes increased with patients requesting reconstruction of old injuries.

Nyabondo Rehabilitation Centre

Nyabondo Rehabilitation Centre hosts three Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Camps staffed by African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) each year, alternating with Orthopaedics. The vision of Sister Ludovena who runs the facility is ever expanding, helping the community in a medical capacity and children with disabilities to access an education and vocational training. Walking into the facility brought back memories, greeted by allied health staff and children from the Cerebral Palsy school. We screened patients on the Monday, mainly children with burns contractures and congenital cleft lips or palates presented. Some "Mamas" returned with their children from previous surgeries to show off their child's new smile and say thank you. I spent the next four days assisting Dr Oduor in the operating theatre. I was intrigued by all aspects of the surgery, the





Closing a burns reconstruction case with help from long-time volunteer nurse, Kibisu



Vivian smiling about how straight her leg is



An evening walk after a long day in theatre, soaking up the village life



Pre-op education - A project Jess' charity "Mama Cynthia" have been running for 5 years

planning of the z-plasty burns reconstruction, using various flaps to cover large skin defects and use of sterile needles for external fixation of joints as an alternate to k-wires. My subcuticular suture lines improved and by the end of the week I was reconstructing a keloid ear scar and closing most incisions.

Following the long days in the operating theatre, I set up a workshop at the nurse's station to fabricate thermoplastic splints to maintain positioning for joints following burns release surgery. The children will wear these splints overnight for six to 12 months to prevent re-contraction of joints. In addition, I collected data at Nyabondo to capture the past five years of plastic surgery cases to better understand common causes of burns and how to prevent them. I also visited a new medical school at Kisii University to lecture about burns prevention and my research in this area.

Use of the MIGA Elective Grant

The \$1,500 community component of the MIGA Elective Grant funded an orthopaedic drill for Nyabondo Rehabilitation Centre. With the four Orthopaedic Surgical Camps per year and up to 100 cases operated, there is no doubt this will be valued and well utilised. It also assisted in purchasing a home theatre system and CD player for the Rift Valley General Provincial Hospital. With this new equipment, music played for the children aims to reduce the trauma associated with burn injuries and dressing changes.

Thank you to MIGA for supporting my elective and the communities in Kenya. Further thanks extends to the following companies that donated medical supplies for the trip – OPC Health, Performance Health, Linkron, Royal Children's Hospital, Festool, Nurse Anne and Rotary Donations in Kind.

My month long medical elective spent in Kenya was both enriching and rewarding. I am grateful for the experience and to be returning to a well-supported internship at The Western Hospital in Melbourne. I look forward to many more volunteer trips in Kenya to spread the burns prevention message and provide assistance for reconstructive surgery

Each year MIGA's Elective Grants Program offers 10 Grants of \$3,000 to medical students undertaking electives in developing communities. Each Grant includes \$1,500 to cover the student's personal elective costs and \$1,500 to provide medicine or other aid to the local community. To be inspired by other past recipients and find out more about applying, visit our website.

MIGA's free Protection Package for medical students provides automatic cover for your elective and clinical placements. Insure with MIGA and undertake your elective with confidence – complete our simple online Application Form for immediate confirmation of your cover.

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