

Kaseye Report, May 2019

Finally mending from my chest infection - accompanied by merciless coughing - I feel energetic enough to report on our activities of the past few weeks.

A definite highlight was the visit of Klaus Harder, a retired German hospital administration who came along our way by recommendation of Dr. Joachim, a very dedicated INTERPLAST surgeon. Klaus is a member of Senior Executive Service (SES), a German agency that places specialists in schools, hospitals and companies in developing countries all over the world. Klaus achieved much during the four weeks at Kaseye, foremost budding awareness among Kaseye Hospital's management staff that much has to change on the way to the next level of patient care.

Another highlight was the visit of the second 2019 INTERPLAST Surgery Team from March 29th to April 12th under the leadership of Dr. Joachim who was ably assisted by Dr. Connie, a general surgeon, as well as nurses Angelika and Martin. The team achieved over 80 surgeries in two weeks! The wide range of surgical experience of Dr. Connie was a definite asset which should carry over into Kaseye's soon-to-be opened OP. Quite a number of common surgeries are not being performed locally for lack of experience of the clinical staff and/or lack of supplies. Demonstrations, follow-ups, introductions, etc., by future INTERPLAST teams to such procedures are indispensable for the sustainability of the new operating theater of Kaseye Hospital. It is not hard to imagine how much more training of local clinical staff is needed for the performance of the highly specialized procedures performed by INTERPLAST's plastic and orthopedic surgeons!

In our own ranks, we have our INTERPLAST volunteer Joshua helping out wherever he can. Last Thursday, was a busy "fracture day" for Joshua – six in all, among them the broken humerus of our carpenter's son. Chitipa District Hospital wanted to refer the child to Mzuzu, the northern capital some 350 km south of Chitipa. Needless to say, that the father was utterly content after his son's fracture had been reduced by Joshua. Thomas drove the happy pair home in the evening - it was raining cats and dogs - to spare them the one-hour trip to their hut (two rooms for seven family members). Joshua, Thomas and I cherish the family's gift of a bag of fresh groundnuts; it symbolizes the gratitude of all involved.

Thomas is another regular among the construction crew, all feverishly laboring at the numerous details in the OP that are awaiting completion. One evening last week, Thomas appeared in the *Old Mill*, a smile on his face: 'The first set of OP lamps is up – after several attempts to assemble quite a few loose parts!' The OP lamp project was a challenge. All our OP lamps arrived in an INTERPLAST container; some more intact than others. Upon closer inspection, Thomas noticed that essential parts of the above lamps were missing. Dr. Michael had to order spares. Not surprisingly, they were not sold in the corner store next to his house and turned out be rather expensive due to the venerable age of the lamps. Months later, they found their way to Kaseye, and some more months after their arrival, they are now installed. Happy are those who persist!

As to me, I have been disturbing the peace of everybody around me for several weeks with my seemingly endless cough. In spite of taking meds, I have a hard time getting rid of it. It seems to be one of those respiratory infections which are not existing or very infrequent in the US and Europa, but pervasive in Malawi. I am limited in my activities: the hospital is not the place for me to be and, in addition, I am often tired. The last couple of days, though, have been showing improvement. I hope I am on the mend. While my cough kept me in involuntary isolation in the *Old Mill*, it occurred to me that TB

is no stranger to my paternal family. Both my cousins had TB which they passed on to my grandmother, who eventually died in the iron lung. My first violin teacher transmitted her TB to me. In light of this history, I decided, with Thomas' agreement, to donate a small TB clinic to Kaseye Hospital, just a testing and a treatment room, two beds and a bathroom. To pay for the clinic, we will sell my viola, the instrument I played that memorable evening some 45 years ago in the student orchestra in Zurich where I met Thomas, the flutist who "was blowing hot air down my neck." Since we are spending more time in Kaseye than at home, the viola is shut up in her case, no longer able to release her beautiful alto voice. It is time to bid farewell to each other so that we can bring hope and healing to the TB patients in our area.

Interrupted by another coughing spell, I decided that this shall be the end of this Kaseye report. We are frequently thinking of you, at times wishing we could just stop by for a moment to enjoy you "in the flesh."

Elisabeth and Thomas