



Mulanje Mission Hospital

Newsletter

December 2020



Mulanje Mission Hospital
CCAP Blantyre Synod
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Malawi

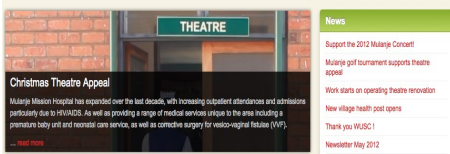
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Editorial Comment *by Dickson Chisale*

Dear friends of MMH, partners and colleagues.

Soon, people all over the world are celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. MMH wishes to share the love of God with it's patients and partners across the world.

Malawi is now in the rainy season and has started receiving a lot of rains. Farmers are busy planting maize and other subsistence and commercial crops. This is the season when we see more malaria and and are at risk of cholera and other water related diseases. In readiness for any outbreak, MMH has identified a place where all suspects whether cholera or COVID-19 cases can be quarantined and treated.

During the year 2020, the operations

of MMH like all hospitals in Malawi have been negatively affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The prices of essential supplies like face masks, gloves, medicines and other personal protective equipment were extremely high. We are thankful for a successful appeal and good teamwork, so that services could continue throughout 2020 without serious interruptions.

Despite the pandemic, MMH is registering an increasing number of patients with Non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetics and asthma with an average increase of 16.6% (drug consumption 2019 and 2020). Many patients flock to MMH to get free treatment for their NCDs. We thank you for all work done together in 2020, and wish you a good Christmas and happy 2021!

Introducing Dr. Julita

MMH has recruited a Medical Officer in October: Dr Julita Kathumba.

'I was born not far from the hospital, right here in Mulanje District, and then spent my youth in Lilongwe', Julita says. Following her studies at the Malawi College of Medicine in Blantyre, she worked at the Oncology department in the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital.

Dr. Julita is especially interested in paediatrics, and in the treatment of cancer patients. She has a family who have joined her here on Mulanje Mission.

We are glad to have her on the team and look forward to improve our services together.



Patrick Nkando is a boy from Traditional Authority Chikumbu, Mulanje district. He is a last born child in a family of five. (NB: Patrick is not his real name).

His story demonstrates the extraordinary difficulties some patients face in accessing the care they need.

In August 2016, his parents observed that he was drinking water frequently, losing weight and getting hungry frequently: signs of diabetes.

On 5th September, 2016, the patient presented with the complaints at Mulanje Mission Hospital and random blood sugar was tested and was found to be 465 mg/dl, which is very high. That day he was seen by Chief clinical Officer, Mr Gama who admitted him. The child was started on medical treatment called sliding scale. He was later discharged on 13th September, 2016 and was put on insulin injections, and

counselling was done.

Despite being on insulin, Patrick started experiencing dizziness every time he was in class. It was difficult to establish the right insulin regimen for him.

On a few occasions it was reported that he was falling down due to blurred vision. He then dropped out of school while in standard 4 in 2017 because he couldn't see properly.

In 2018, it was reported by his sister that the child was not compliant to drugs, some times he was refusing to inject himself. The NCD coordinator, myself, called the parents together with a child to hear from both sides. The child said that most of the times he used to stay without eating due to lack of food hence he couldn't inject himself while very hungry and the parents on their side complained that the child just was just misbehaving although they didn't deny the issue of food scarcity.

They were encouraged to use easily available meals so that the child doesn't stay hungry. The child was then seen only infrequently at the clinic.

In early January, 2019, the coordinator and an NCD Community volunteer, Mr Patrick Ngwalamba visited the home of Mr and Mrs Nkando, just to enquire more after missing their appointment dates. That day his diabetes was found very much out of range.

The family was again encouraged to continue using the available meals and further treatment was introduced. The community volunteer left some money for them to get to Mulanje Mission for refill and to get the new drug.

On examination, it was discovered that the child had cataracts on both eyes. He went to a nearby hospital, without results. The child reported back and I presented the case to the ophthalmology team at Queens referral hospital which referred him to a doctor at Zomba central hospital. The doctor advised MMH to send the patient to Zomba and he was sent in September 2019. Unfortunately, the child was sent back saying they start operating at the age of 16 but he was 11. Another consultation was made again at Queens who ordered to send the patient via their ophthalmology department. They went to queens on 20th December 2019. On both journeys to Zomba and Queens hospitals he was supported by the same volunteer using his own money.

The right eye was operated on 29th December 2019 and the left eye on 5th January 2020. He was discharged on 9th February 2020, with his sight back and able to rejoin school. Currently the child is being reviewed regularly at Mulanje Mission NCD clinic. Like for children in the whole world, it is difficult for Patrick to follow the prescription for his diabetes.

He will be followed closely in the NCD clinic at MMH, and by the community volunteer supporting him.



Felix Tembo with Patrick and his family

The meaning of ‘Quality’ has been defined in several ways. Some scholars define it as performance according to standards. Some have defined it as meeting or exceeding customer expectations while others have defined it as doing right things the right way the first time.

The US QI Institute defines quality in the health sector as “the degree to which health services for individuals and populations increase the likelihood of desired health outcomes and are consistent with current professional knowledge”. Quality improvement activities should focus on effectiveness, efficiency, accessibility, acceptability, equitability and safety.

According to Malawi Quality Improvement policy, the ‘5S Model’ is the

entry point and the foundation of all quality improvement work in Malawi. Since 2007 5s has been practiced in various hospitals in the country. Yet less had been done at Mulanje Mission Hospital.

In January, 2020, some officials from the quality management department in the Ministry of Health appreciated MMH efforts towards quality improvement and recommended that 5s should be added to the program.

In July 2020, a research project by AMREF revealed that MMH was outstanding in quality improvement activities as compared to the other facilities that were in the research project. However, lack of 5S activities was also highlighted.

With funding from AMREF, two nurs-

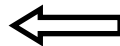
es from MMH were trained in 5S and the concept immediately rolled out at the hospital.

The most interesting part is that although only labour ward and nursery were spearheaded to start, other departments such as female ward, OPD, Theatre, male ward have also started implementing 5S. This has not only improved ward appearance but also work efficiency and patient care. Time wastage in search of resources has been minimized.

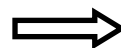
Currently, all staff trainings include the concept of 5S so that we reach out to as many members of staff as possible while planning for proper training for members of staff. MMH will continue working towards standardization and organization with the 5S model.



Before 5S



After 5S



Introduction of the 5S methodology: (Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, Sustain) has improved organization of wards at MMH

Pregnancy rates amongst adolescents are very high in Mulanje at 31.6% of all pregnancies in our district. Childbearing in teenagers is associated with poorer health outcomes, lower educational levels and lower socio-economic status of the mother and the children. One-third of all new HIV infections are among 15–24 year old people, of which 70% are girls and young women.

MMH felt the need to start a programme to prevent teenage pregnancies and therefore implemented this in January 2020.

Just after the start of the project, a survey revealed that in Mulanje indeed a very high large number of teenage pregnancies were seen, associated with school closures during COVID-19. In total 896 pregnant teenagers were counted in Mulanje district between March and September (Social welfare office, 2020).

The project started under the theme: improve knowledge among adolescents and youth, improve access to health services and increase public and private discussion about teenage pregnancy. The project is being im-

plemented in the catchment area of MMH and is funded by the Good Little Company.

The aim of the project is to increase capacity of adolescents and youth to

- In the highest grade of primary schools, and the lowest grade of secondary schools, comprehensive sexual education sessions have been organized. We have done 20 sessions with a total of 1.200 pupils being reached.



Talent show at Mulanje Mission Youth Centre

access appropriate services and make safer sexual and reproductive health choices. Hopefully resulting in a reduction of teenage pregnancy numbers and associated medical problems.

Below are some of the things that we have done in this programme so far:

- A mentor network of peers have been established through the Youth Clubs already running in the catchment area. These peer mentors, 60 in total, have been mentored to act as role models and leaders. A pilot has been done with some of the peer mentors to make them access points for family planning materials (so-called community based distributors) which will be evaluated.

- Youth friendly health services have been strengthened through a refresher training of 10 healthcare workers. This has led to easier access to health care and counseling services for youth

- A girls conference was organized for 100 girls between the age of 10 and 16 years of age. A central theme was the discussion of power balances and negotiation skills.

- Awareness on health for youth was improved through radio messages, community dialogue sessions with parents, church leaders and chiefs.

- Community dialogue sessions were conducted with 15 groups of village headmen and 504 community members. At last youth talent shows helped to increase knowledge on sexual reproductive health to adolescent boys and girls through music and health talks that were done.

The COVID-19 pandemic and effects on teenagers made it even clearer to us how important such prevention programmes are. We therefore hope to continue with this programme in 2021 and contribute to the lives of many young girls.



School education sessions

The rainy season has come again when cases of malaria and other water borne diseases rise in our catchment area. This is the time when increased numbers of under five children are admitted in various hospitals. Let me thank UNICEF for the overwhelming support in distributing malaria commodities in Africa, Malawi inclusive. Surely, many deaths that would have been happening are now under control.

In short, I would say almost all program supplies funded by government donors are available in all hospitals in Malawi. We can talk of reproductive health supplies, Tuberculosis (TB) supplies, antiretroviral supplies and malaria supplies as mentioned above. A big salute to the programmes working to achieve this.

How about other health commodities? Are all hospitals in Malawi well equipped with the essential and vital medicines and supplies to manage all cases including water borne diseases? The answer is no.

Malawi's ministry of health through its Central Medical Stores Trust has for many years been under stocked



Essential drugs for treating malaria ready for use

of these important supplies. There are two main reasons mentioned.

Firstly, funds available to the Ministry of Health are inadequate.

Secondly, there is a lot of corruption in government including the Ministry of Health. Therefore, due to the serious shortages of drugs, many times patients or guardians have been asked to buy medicines from private pharmacies.

This leads to a situation whereby 'free' services as they are supposed

to be are in fact not free at all.

Is the situation the same at Mulanje Mission Hospital? No. The pharmacy department has almost every medicine and supply needed according to the level of care as a CHAM facility.

Radiology department has just been rebranded with a modern digital X-Ray machine. Patients do not need to carry X-Ray films to look for a doctor. What a blessing.

The laboratory department is functioning well with a hematology machine performing full blood counts. The Lab has a microscope for basic tests like blood film and stool and urine microscopy. Very soon, we will be receiving a new chemistry machine which will help diversify our services. Some of the tests to be done are liver function tests, renal function tests, especially important for some clients on HIV treatment.

MMH is very proud of the partnerships that make all this possible. The communities around the hospital's catchment area and beyond enjoy the full package of health care services rendered to them.



MMH essential and vital medicines and supplies

In this time before Christmas, we ask your attention for the care of **sick children and remote communities**.

Mulanje Mission Hospital is planning to improve the Children's Ward at the hospital in 2021.

We need to improve separation of children with infections from those who need critical care.

There is also need for a larger and better equipped treatment room for newly admitted and very sick children.

On the maintenance programme too is the renovation of six healthposts that need repairs. These healthposts are used by nurses and clinicians during outreach clinics.

Please consider a donation to our Christmas appeal for children and patients in remote areas.

You can use the accountnumbers mentioned on the frontpage of this Newsletter, or get in touch via director@mmh.mw.

To all our friends and partners...

MULANJE MISSION
HOSPITAL



Merry Christmas and a happy new Year !