

Fellowship at BEIT CURE International & Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Blantyre, Malawi

January-June 2006

BEIT CURE International Hospital is an impressive purpose-built Children's Orthopaedic Hospital with two well-equipped theatres (comprehensive Orthopaedic kit, Image intensifier), Ultrasound & X-ray diagnostic facilities and a 50-bedded ward. Patients are recruited at 'outreach clinics' all over Malawi (giving an excellent opportunity to see something of the country into the bargain). Trauma is undertaken at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital. There are three or four full-time Orthopaedic Consultant Surgeons with an active research department. There is ample opportunity to gain supervised experience in a wide range of pathology in a volume that would be difficult to match in the UK setting.

Malawi is a particularly beautiful part of the world. It has a pleasant climate (rainy season in our spring) and friendly people. Although it's off the tourist radar, Lake Malawi is idyllic, the Mulanje massif rises majestically from the African plain in the south, and there's plenty to see in the game parks. Blantyre is the commercial capital of Malawi, it has plenty of facilities (including western-style supermarkets with western style pricing!) and an international airport (nothing direct from UK though).

I had an excellent Fellowship experience here – it significantly exceeded my expectations. I saw hundreds of out-patients and added over 200 cases to my logbook. SAC approval was readily established given the high standard of facilities and training at this centre. This is a rare opportunity for a life-changing experience with high-standard developed world Orthopaedic care in a developing world setting. I thoroughly recommend it as a centre for an elective paediatric fellowship. I went with my wife and 6 month old daughter – we were all fine throughout.

Notes:

- This is a volunteer fellowship – so it's important to establish how you will finance the trip as early as possible. Malawi is Scotland's priority developing nation at the moment so Scottish trainees might seek funding from Government.
- BEIT CURE Hospital is run by a Christian Charity – visitors should expect and respect the Christian ethos of the Hospital and its full-time staff.
- As with any fellowship you should establish in advance your accommodation, car-hire arrangements and any other anticipated charges (eg Registration with Medical Council of Malawi) so you can budget accordingly.
- You will need registration with Medical Council of Malawi with which the Hospital helps you – they are quite strict about proof of qualifications so you would be best to take notarised copies of your original medical degree and up to date GMC certificate with you.
- There are opportunities to become involved in trauma but the emphasis of this fellowship is elective paediatrics.
- Malaria prophylaxis requires some thought – it's a resistant area - we all (including my 6 month old daughter) took malarone throughout and were fine.
- Lake Malawi has significant Bilharzia/Schistosomiasis in spite of what some tell you. Either take a risk, swim in it's beautiful water and take a pill afterwards, or sit jealously on the shore!
- Flights are via South Africa or Kenya. The latter is generally cheaper but Nairobi is not as great an interchange as Jo'burg.
- Mobile phones in Malawi are ubiquitous and texting is cheap – buy a SIM card locally and put into your own phone – it's the easiest way to keep in touch.
- Internet is dial-up only and painfully slow at times.
- The contact point at the Hospital is Mr. J Harrison, Medical Director & Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon.

I would be happy to answer e-mails from interested parties.

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