



Jim and Carolyn Brown in Cameroon



Pan-African Academy of Christian Surgeons (PAACS)
at Mbingo Baptist Hospital

August 2012



Dr. Sparks, Dr. Ine, and Jim

There have been some big events recently at Mbingo: On June 22, we held a graduation ceremony for Dr. Henry Ine, a 5th years PAACS resident, and also for the first two graduates from CIMS, the Christian Internal Medicine Specialist residency program. It was an exciting day that included much celebration. There are more photos and details at <http://jimandcarolynfromcameroon.wordpress.com>

Our residents completed their annual in service exam July 6th. This year there was a greater emphasis on

basic sciences for the first and second year residents than there had been in the past. It was not an easy exam, and three of our residents must take a remedial exam on September 1. The exam is given in English, and is always more difficult for our francophone residents. On September 5, five of them will take a written certification exam for the College of Surgeons for East, Central, and Southern Africa (COSECSA). There's a lot of tension around these upcoming tests.

The hospital continues to be busy and often full. The last few weeks have been stressful for Jim and the residents with many cases delayed or cancelled because there was not enough OR time. We are looking at a variety of ways to improve OR availability and efficiency. Staffing, space, equipment, patient preparation, and work hours are all factors that affect how much we can do. We have also limited the number of elective cases done each day, in order to take care of the emergencies. Telling people they must go elsewhere for their surgery has not been easy.

Our hearts ache over many of the things we see each day. Numerous people present late with advanced disease. Others have complications that are preventable or treatable if seen early. Often patients don't get what they need simply because we cannot get to them, or don't have what is needed to treat them correctly. It's exhausting to feel like we're compromising standards, or rationing health care, but many of these choices are unavoidable. It does seem like we're doing less

“fixing of the problems” (like us Westerners are so known for) and more working within the system than we used to do. Maybe that means identifying more with our co-workers and the pain they must live with every day. We talk about “leaving at Jesus’ feet” those patients we can’t help, but we’re usually in the midst of the struggle to let go of them ourselves.

Also painful are some issues with the residents. We see attitudes, behaviors, and a lack of teamwork that are hard to watch. Addressing these things takes time, wisdom, prayer, and thoughtful interactions. We’re thankful for Jerry, our new Chief Resident, who works hard and is fair but firm. Most of these issues are being addressed and some of the changes take time and consistency.

We have our own issues with not understanding all the dynamics going on around us, missing important social cues that aren’t the same here as at home, language barriers, being tired, and not always responding well.

Carolyn’s weekly Bible study with the resident’s wives is going well. For those who are there each week, talking and praying about (among other things) our lack of forgiveness, tendency toward criticism, and wanting to look good before others has drawn us together as we long for and ask God for a PAACS community that is unified and supportive of one another.

And, our PAACS family is growing. Just this week we welcomed two new Residents to Mbingo. Dr. Moses Kusumba (pictured on the left) is from Uganda. He trained in Ukraine where he met his wife, Lera. Their little daughter only speaks Russian! Dr. Esmeraldino Celestino is from Angola. His family hasn’t arrived in Cameroon yet. This picture was



taken at a recent “White Coat Ceremony” held for the new PAACS and CIMS residents. We are pleased to see more joint events and conferences between the two groups of residents, knowing that working collaboratively is not only more fun, but results in much better patient care.

We would ask you to pray for us:

- **For wisdom and sensitivity in relating to residents and staff**
- **That we could see the things to celebrate rather than be overwhelmed by the difficult things we often cannot change**
- **Our residents who must take important exams September 1st and 5th**
- **A safe and refreshing time away: We’ll travel to Yaoundé August 18-21 to renew Carolyn’s passport**

With much gratitude for each of you,

Jim and Carolyn Brown