

SWB SEMINAR IN MEDICINE AND SURGERY: RWANDA 2011: CHAIR'S REPORT

Specialists Without Borders (SWB) ran another very successful conference from the 7th to 9th September 2011 at the Serena hotel in Kigali, Rwanda. The programme was broadened this year to cater for the specific needs of Rwandan doctors and medical students, based on needs assessment carried out in conjunction with Flinders University through Donald Bramwell. The major component requested and added to the programme was in the area of critical and intensive care. SWB was extremely fortunate to have an intensivist from St Vincent's in Melbourne, Antony Tobin, greatly supported by a critical care physiotherapist and medical student, Kim Yeoh.

Antony and Kim not only lectured but were involved in the small groups teaching SCIMS, which SWB has evolved. They also participated in the ward rounds at the large public hospital, conveniently located 800 meters from the hotel, which they found extremely useful and stimulating. They were joined by Tim Lawrence from Oxford who also lectured and instructed on paediatric neurosurgery. This had been the other area of concern identified in previous research, as well as the area of paediatric and neonatal surgery. Again, SWB was fortunate to be able to have Professor Andrew Ford, retired head of Department of Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide. Andrew who now lives in Italy, flew in especially for the SWB conference and has extensive experience in paediatric surgery. His seamless integration into the small group teaching made for a successful new component.

The conference was co-hosted by the Rwandan Surgical Society, and in keeping with the SWB philosophy, was free to all local doctors and medical students. Approximately 90 attended the three-day conference. Incorporating the feedback from the previous year, the conference was this year structured differently, breaking up didactic lectures every few hours with SCIMS, and the conference ran very smoothly. This was despite the attendance at the conference facilities of the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, with a security entourage which meant that all the doctors and students attending the conference had to pass through a physical and electronic security check, which delayed our start on one morning.

The programme we had specifically split into didactic lectures over 2 to 3 hours grouping together areas of surgical and medical interest or followed by SCIMS. Within this programme we catered for neurosurgery and paediatric neurosurgery with Kate Drummond and Tim Lawrence, trauma surgery with Frank Stening and David Birks, general surgery and urology with Katherine Edyvane, breast surgery with David Birks, ENT with Sharad Chawla and a large orthopaedic component with Professor Jegan Krishnan and Rudi Jaarsma.

The development of knowledge modules within these specialties over a five year period serves to build on previous teaching. SWB's aim is in the future to evolve a curriculum for developing countries. An essential component with these schemes was the involvement of the medical students both in terms of organisation and providing live bodies to demonstrate clinical skills. There was also the added benefit that the students were exposed to specialist teaching which they found invaluable.

SWB has a strong commitment to medical students. They are considered the lifeblood of the organisation and there is also a firm commitment to expose them to medical problems and issues in developing countries where there is the greatest need. This year SWB had in excess of 40 Australasian students applying to come to Rwanda with the specialists. A selection process was introduced and 10 students selected. Kim Yeoh from the University of Melbourne was appointed the medical student representative and she did an outstanding job of coordinating the students. Five consultants then took the students on a prearranged visit to a peripheral hospital at Nyamata. The students were then exposed to a full range of pathology, surgical TB, trauma, rheumatic fever, Marasmus, Kwashiorkor, meningitis, hydrocephalus and obstetrics and gynaecological problems. Ward rounds were conducted in

conjunction with the local doctors which made for an intense learning situation for everyone, immensely appreciated by the students.

Overall the executive were extremely pleased with the informal feedback from all those participating and the accompanying medical students. There is a genuine belief that SWB is filling a need by promoting high-quality undergraduate and postgraduate medical and surgical education. This has yet to be fully evaluated through written feedback and further consultation with Flinders University, but is sufficiently encouraging to the executive to further develop the concept.

2012 Plans

The proposal for 2012 is to combine teaching the alliance of East African surgical residents in a seminar just before their final exams. This would therefore be a seminar which aimed at not only refining their knowledge but enhancing their examination skills. It is intended this would be conducted in Malawi and possibly in conjunction with the Rwandan seminar a few days later. Further interest has been expressed to conduct something similar in Burma and an approach to postgraduate teaching in East Timor has been initiated.

There are a number of new medical and surgical consultants applying to join SWB and consideration will also be given in 2012 to a concurrent nursing conference.

As chairman of SWB, it has been a great privilege being involved with so many like-minded consultants and medical students and to see the growth of the organisation with increasing support being shown from the corporate groups. We would like to express our great thanks to Allergan, Johnson & Johnson and Tyco and look forward to the involvement of others in what is becoming an increasingly worthwhile and significant project

Membership / Sponsorship

If you would like to sponsor SWB in general, medical student participation or doctors / nurses / allied health personnel in developing countries, there are online facilities for donations which can be specified or for the general costs of the seminars.

Gratefully Acknowledged

SWB National Executive gratefully acknowledge those surgeons, registrars and students who gave of their time and travelled to Rwanda and made this seminar the success it was.

For more information about SWB, please log on to our website: www.specialistswithoutborders.org

Prepared by: **Dr Paul Anderson, on behalf of the SWB National Executive Committee**

Contact: info@specialistswithoutborders.org

Date: **17 September 2011**

