



# SWB

Specialists Without Borders  
meeting needs through medical education

ISSUE  
11

SPRING /  
2016 Edition

In Brief.



## Chairman's Report: October 2016

The team has recently returned from an exceedingly successful trip to Malawi and Zimbabwe where we taught 250 attendees including medical and clinical officer students, nurses and nursing students, surgical registrars and senior registrars preparing for their final exams. It was a great pleasure to meet with returning participants to share in the challenges and triumphs experienced of the last 12 months.

This year saw our program for medical and clinical officer students and our nursing program being established as core aspects of SWB's broader scope. This has been facilitated by new team members who have added

much appreciated depth to the knowledge and experience of our group. To see our team working so well together, embracing the flexible nature of our programs and supporting each other provides a wonderful reminder of what enthusiastic people, working together towards a common goal, can achieve.

As always, it was wonderful to meet with the senior colleagues who have welcomed our team into their hospitals year after year. This includes Prof Nyengo Mkandawire and Prof Patrick Noah of the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Blantyre and Prof Godfrey Muguti of the University of Zimbabwe. These relationships are vital for our organisation's ability to build capacity of health care workers in African settings.

This is an exciting time for SWB. We have a great team working toward expanding our organisation and making the most of exciting new opportunities to reach health care professionals in new locations. This is thanks to the commitment of our team, the enthusiasm of those who attend our programs and, of course, the support of our in-country partners.

A special mention also goes to our supporters. From our major sponsor STA to the individuals who made their own much appreciated donations, we say thank you for allowing SWB to do what we do!

**Kate Drummond and Paul Anderson**

## WHAT WE DO

[www.  
specialistswithoutborders.org](http://www.specialistswithoutborders.org)

SWB is an Australia-based non-profit organisation working to enhance the sustainability of medical service provision in developing countries.

SWB co-ordinates an international group of volunteer medical specialists, delivering specialist-led training programs for medical personnel in partner countries. For more about our projects and our volunteer teams of specialists, please visit our website.

## Know Your Teaching Team

Cardiothoracic Surgeon Dr John Tharion has over 25 years' teaching and clinical experience and has made a huge contribution to SWB over the last 5 years bringing his enthusiasm and experience to the team. This year, his wife Dr Maya Tharion, Staff Specialist in Anatomical Pathology at Canberra Hospital, joined the team for our programs in Malawi and Zimbabwe where her valuable knowledge added to a largely surgical and critical care focused program.



Both John and Maya undertook their medical education in India, which gives them valuable insight into the challenges faced by medical professionals in developing countries. One of the benefits of volunteering as members of the SWB team is the way that working with medical students takes them back to when they were students themselves. The willingness

to learn displayed by the participants also makes for a rewarding, enjoyable experience.

John suggests that anyone with a genuine desire to help others would find teaching with the SWB team to be an incredibly rewarding experience.

## Thank You to Our Donors, Especially Specialised Therapeutics Australia

Specialised Therapeutics Australia has renewed their support for SWB with a generous donation earlier this year. SWB would not be able to continue its work without this

support and our sincere thanks goes to Carlo Montagner and Bozena Zembrzuski for being such champions of sustainable international development.

SWB has also been lucky enough to receive donations from the Surgical Students Society of Melbourne, who donated proceeds from their Charity Calendar and the Rotary Club of Seymour who held a seminar presented by SWB's Kate Drummond. Most recently,

SWB received a donation from the MD Student Conference where Dr Paul Anderson gave a very entertaining performance alongside his son Jordan.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who made a donation, both big and small, throughout the year. Without the financial support of organisations and individuals SWB would not be able to reach hundreds of health care professionals in developing countries each year.

## Know Your Nursing Team

### Kate McKarthy

Kate McKarthy is an Associate Nurse Unit Manager and Critical Care Liaison Nurse in the Dept of Critical Care at St Vincent's in Melbourne.

In 2013 she was asked to join a team of nurses tasked with setting up a nursing program to compliment the medical program. She finds the team of nurses fun to work with and is constantly impressed by the wealth of knowledge and expertise held by the SWB team.

When it comes to the nurses who attend SWB's program "the nurses we are teaching are like sponges! They are keen to learn and each year the program has gotten bigger!".

She recommends that nurses wanting to get involved need to be flexible because Africa can throw you a lot of curve balls. "Your teaching style must be adaptable to any

environment, one day you could be teaching under a tree, the next in the Library! We currently have ICU, Neurosurgery, Theater/Recovery, Midwifery and Paediatric specialties and would benefit greatly from an Orthopaedic/Surgical Nurse. If you were considering joining the SWB nursing team, you should be working clinically in your area of expertise in a clinical nurse specialist role".



## Junior Doctor Profile

### Dr Ida Whiteman

After growing up in country Victoria, Ida completed her medical degree at Monash University during which time she took up the opportunity to



travel to Port Moresby, PNG for an obstetrics placement. This experience served as a shocking reminder of the poor health outcomes experienced in Australia's neighbouring countries, like many others around the world.

Ida began her career at the Royal Melbourne Hospital before traveling to Darwin where she worked for a year at the Royal Darwin Hospital. She is currently at the Royal Children's Hospital.

Her first encounter with the importance of making a lasting impact through education and training came through experience gained while volunteering in Nepal after the devastating earthquake in 2015. This experience meant she jumped at the opportunity to join the SWB team

for 2016. She feels lucky to have been part of a team where the sole focus was on complementing the training of an already highly equipped medical workforce in Malawi and Zimbabwe.

"Working with SWB, you find yourself surrounded by a team of doctors and nurses from Australia who are keen to teach and learn. Everyone is humble and curious to know more about each other, regardless of their own personal achievements"

Her advice for anyone interested in joining the SWB team in the future would be to have a chat to those that have gone in the past, and get in touch via the email address. She is certainly right in thinking that the team would be happy to hear from you!



## Nursing Profile Phoebe Tambala



Phoebe is a senior nursing officer in the Paediatric Accident and Emergency Department at the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Blantyre, Malawi. She previously worked in the Paediatric High Dependency Unit before moving to A&E this year. She is a nursing matron in charge of 16 nurses.

The best thing about her job is seeing children 'getting back up on their feet' after a period of illness. She also enjoys the fact that she is constantly learning new things. Difficulties she faces in her daily

working life are limited resources and high large number of patients that each nurse has in their care. The low number of doctors on duty can be challenging as nurses are often responsible for caring for very unwell patients until a doctors is able to assess a patient. She says that it is for this reason that nurses need to have a high level of knowledge so that they can hand over to the doctor when they are available.

Phoebe feels that the planning and procedures component of the SWB programs will be particularly useful as it will help people to know exactly what they need to do in an emergency situation.

This will be especially useful when there is prior warning that a very sick patient will be arriving and planning can be done before the patient arrives. She also explained that all the nurses who attended the SWB program have made a schedule for when they will share what they have learnt during the seminars with colleagues who did not attend.

Phoebe has been awarded a scholarship to complete as Masters of Public Health at Melbourne University next year. Our team are looking forward to finding out what Phoebe thinks of Melbourne (the home town of many of our team) and her experiences in Australia.



## Medical Student Profile Caius Martin

Caius Martin joined the SWB team in 2016 as one of the amazing medical students who contribute through assisting with small group teaching, often as the 'patient', ensuring accurate participant registration, and collating valuable feedback from those who are involved in SWB's programs.

During his studies Caius, a medical student at Monash University in Melbourne, has always admired the educational environment that exists from medical school, to advanced

training and beyond. In medicine especially, there is always something to learn from others and to teach our peers, and this is one of the core principles for programs like those run by SWB. Caius sees the power of education being that the benefits are far-reaching: lying not only with actual participants, but also with their respective peers and students. This is what Caius thinks gives the program lasting value and sustainability.

Caius has an interest in international health, which he has developed through experiences abroad and on exchange. He hoped to gain an understanding of how health care is delivered in developing countries through his experience with SWB.

For Caius, the most valuable thing

about being included SWB's trip to Malawi and Zimbabwe was an insight into the realities of medical practice in developing countries – especially Malawi. Access to hospital resources made a stark contrast with what he had known throughout his medical training. Overall the experience was similar to his expectations of a medical education program run for local institutions and staff in developing countries, with the biggest (pleasant) surprise actually being how sociable the team could be after a day's work!

If you are a medical student with an interest in global health, check our website and Facebook page in April 2017 when medical student applications or the 2017 trip will open.



## SWB Stethoscope Drive

In the lead up to each year's trip we make a wish list of needed or requested items to donate at the hospitals where we conduct medical education programs. We carefully evaluate how we can transport these and which items will be of most use. Every year we wish that we were able to donate more stethoscopes, especially for medical and clinical

officer students who often don't have access to their own quality stethoscope.

For the 2017 trip we have a new plan. One that involves our wonderful supporters, people like you!

We are asking for the donation of stethoscopes, preferably new,

but used stethoscopes in good condition would also be appreciated. For those who wish to, we suggest that you write a note containing words of encouragement for the recipient. You would be more than welcome to include your email address if you would be interested in hearing directly from the individual who receives your generous donation.

## You Can Help.



### 1. Volunteer as a SWB team member

Please contact us if you are a medical specialist, nurse or allied health professional interested in volunteering your expertise and time with our teaching team in developing countries.

### 2. Make a Donation

While all the specialists involved in SWB medical education programs fund their own flights and accommodation, general donations are invaluable to our work. These donations are used to cover the costs associated with delivery of our medical education programs.

### 3. Become a Member

Membership is entirely free and means that you will receive our newsletters and other updates about SWB. We appreciate that many health care professionals may be unable to volunteer with us, but still want to know about the work we do.



Visit our website or join our Facebook group for more.



Instagram:  
[specialists\\_without\\_borders](#)



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(SWB)**

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