

Healthlinks newsletter

NHS Wales for Africa

EARLIER this year the Welsh Assembly Government announced that £50,000 would be made available annually to support NHS Wales institutions and academic partners to develop and nurture long lasting relationships in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In response to this funding and a strong belief in the work of the existing links that operate between Wales and Africa, it was decided to create a forum to promote and share best practice. The result was the NHS Wales for Africa Conference, which took place on Friday 29th June, 2007 and was attended by healthcare professionals from across the NHS in Wales, Welsh universities and African health care organisations.

The First Minister for Wales, Rhodri Morgan said: "Wales has built strong Links over the last 20 years with Lesotho and has forged strong Links with communities and institutions in Uganda, Ethiopia and Somaliland, as well as elsewhere in Africa.

The decision to get involved with a Link can be inspiring and a life changing experience. Seeing how health care is delivered in other cultural settings with different and fewer resources can be a particularly enriching experience.

Prince Seeiso B Seeiso, High Commissioner for Lesotho, which has an established Link with Dolen Cymru added: "The last 22 years have enabled many thousands of



First Minister Rhodri Morgan greets HRH Prince Seeiso of Lesotho

people in both Wales and Lesotho to learn from one another through wide-ranging links. The Link has helped to develop confidence where that was lacking; bring knowledge where that was inadequate and develop understanding where that was ill-informed. In a country such as Lesotho where migration of many key personnel to other regions is a daily phenomenon, Dolen has brought, and can continue to bring, considerable benefits to those communities."

The speakers gave members of the conference an opportunity to engage with the issues facing their colleagues in Sub-Saharan Africa and investigate some of

the solutions that can be achieved through partnership working.

The conference was a great success and will act as a stepping stone to gather momentum across the NHS in Wales, and add to the already fantastic work that is being carried out by organisations across Wales today.

For more information on some of the projects please see the links below

- www.pont-mbale.org.uk/index.htm
- www.ethiopiagwentlink.org/
- www.dolencymru.com/english/main_page_eng.htm
- swanseagambialink.org

THET and the Uganda Government Sign Memorandum of Understanding

THET and the Government of the Republic of Uganda have recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The objective of the collaboration is to strengthen and support Links between hospitals, associations of health professionals, health training institutions and other related health organisations in Uganda and the United Kingdom.

Win up to £1,000 for your Health Link

HOW has your work made a difference? Tell us, and your link could win £1,000.

All you have to do is write up an account of your Link up to 1000 words and demonstrate how your Link has made a

Update on Crisp Report

A TWO day workshop was held in London on 6th/7th June 2007 at DFID Headquarters to provide a forum for all stakeholders in international links to discuss the findings of the independent Crisp Report.

The workshop, entitled 'Global Health Partnerships: Informing the Government's response' was attended by government and non government organizations such as THET, BUILD, VSO, Mediciens sans Frontiers, Merlin and the Royal Colleges' International Forum.

Topics for discussion were led by Stewart Tyson, Head of Profession (Health) at the Department for International Development (DFID) and Nick Banatvala, Head of Global Affairs in the Department of Health (DH).

DH and DFID are leading the government's response to Nigel Crisp's report. In doing this they are working with other government departments and agencies. The results of the workshop is feeding into their response, which will then go to the Inter-Ministerial Working Group which was the group that received Lord Crisp's Report.

Following the recent government re-shuffle, it is expected that the report will be considered by the new Ministers in the autumn.

Ethiopian Links meeting

UK Link partners gathered on 30th January for a strategic review of Link objectives and activity in Ethiopia. Some of the wider challenges in the health sector were also discussed; such as the internal 'brain drain' and health financing issues.

It was agreed that a greater understanding of the government health strategy in Ethiopia would be useful and since January, two updates on Ministry Health Policy have been circulated by THET.

difference to patient care, policy or staff development. Joint submissions between overseas and UK partners will be particularly welcome.

Visit the **THET website** for further details or contact Susana Edjang on **Susana@thet.org** or 020 7290 3880.

Evaluation of Health Links

A WORKSHOP was held at the Brighton & Sussex Medical School on 23rd July 2007, to consider approaches to the evaluation of Health Links. As more and more interest is shown in linking, it has become increasingly necessary to provide evidence to employers and organisations of the impact and effectiveness of Links, and to confirm the benefits not only to less developed countries but in lessons learnt by healthcare staff returning to jobs in the UK.

Information is currently being collected by Links by a variety of means such as visit reports, pre / post training questionnaires, clinical data and training diaries. However, more in-depth information needs to be collected as there is a definite lack of baseline data from which to measure change. More detailed information is needed not only to provide feedback to donors and Trust Boards but also to inform the development of Links, to document lessons learnt and to honestly record what has not worked.

A report detailing the main points discussed at the conference is available to download from the THET website www.thet.org

Volunteer Programme

Royal College of Psychiatrists

OVER the last five years the Royal College of Psychiatrists have developed a register of members, consultants and trainees, prepared to serve in developing countries as volunteers, and of countries wanting help, together with a system of mentoring volunteers and welcoming exchange visits.

The programme offers opportunities for Mental Health Links and for other Health Links wanting to reinforce and develop their psychiatric dimensions.

For more information contact Joanna Carroll jcarroll@rcppsyach.ac.uk



The first regional Health Link with Pakistan North to North

MANY communities in the North West and Yorkshire and Humber regions responded to the needs in Pakistan after the aftermath of the earthquake in 2005. It became clear, not only that there was the need for long term reconstruction work, but that the health system needed to be strengthened to make it better than before the earthquake.

At the request of the Department of Health in North West Frontier Province (NWFP), a team of three from the Regional

Public Health Groups of the North West and Yorkshire and Humber regions visited NWFP.

At the end of the week's visit a long list of possible areas of collaboration were narrowed down to three issues, namely: developing leadership and management competencies at district level; ensuring emergency planning skills were developed so that the country would be better prepared in the future and building capacity to develop more effective methods of ensuring professional standards.

Whilst the partnership is still in its infancy, there has been a lot of support from both UK and Pakistani healthcare colleagues and the local communities to take this work forward. A small steering group is working through raising funds, formalising the partnership arrangements and engaging NHS partners.

If anyone, particularly from the North West of Yorkshire and Humber regions, wishes to get involved in this partnership please contact Isobel.Duckworth@nhs.net

Home Office update

What you need to know

OVER the past year a number of Links have experienced difficulties in facilitating visas for legitimate Link visitors to the UK because of a tightening of immigration regulations. A number of meetings have been held between THET and the Home Office, which have resulted in the introduction of interim procedures for the granting of visas while the biometric visa system is being fully implemented in a number of countries worldwide.

In order to obtain visitors visas for overseas healthcare professionals travelling to the UK, it will be necessary to plan ahead by:

- Registering your Health Link on the THET database so that the Home Office is able to check credentials

- Send all supporting documents to the UKvisas Stakeholder Engagement Office London SW1A 2AH (Tel 020 7008 8369) or e mail to Mark.Walmsley@fco.gov.uk. London will inform the Overseas Entry Clearance Manager.
- Please note, the UKvisa Stakeholder will be required to be notified preferably 3 months in advance of a visit. It will be necessary to provide the Stakeholder Office and local visa office with:
 - a letter from THET confirming that the Health Link is legitimate and the proposed visit is part of planned activity
 - a letter from the health institution confirming the names of visiting personnel,

dates of travel and confirmation that the UK link will pay all costs involved. This funding may come from a donation from elsewhere.

The overseas visitor will be required to present the following documentation to the Entry Clearance manager:

- a letter of invitation from the UK institution
- a letter from the health institution giving permission for the visit
- current medical / professional certificate of registration

If you have any queries or would like to find out more, please visit the THET website at www.thet.org.uk for full details.

Keyhole surgery in Tanzania

THE introduction of laparoscopic surgery to a less developed country in Africa may seem to be a bit curious. However, surgeons in the UK have for many years advocated the benefits of keyhole surgery in reducing the risk of post operative infection; and in an African hospital, with few antibiotics, the risk of post operative infection is high.

Liam Horgan, Director of the Laparoscopic Institute at Hexham General Hospital in Northumberland, has been the driving force behind the training of surgeons at Northumbria Healthcare's link hospital, Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre (KCMC) in northern Tanzania. Following the donation of a laparoscopic set of equipment and instruments in 2004, Liam has visited KCMC each year to ensure that the surgeons build up skills over months of practice. As surgeons are required to operate through tiny incisions using only a TV monitor to view their movements inside the body, it is necessary to undertake many hours of training on a simulator, before being able to operate on a patient.

Keyhole surgery is very important to KCMC for a number of reasons; it reduces the risk of post operative infection, it is less invasive surgery for the patient and most important, the patient can be treated and allowed to go home within 24-48 hours. KCMC is a 450 bed hospital caring for a population of 13 million people, so it is always working at



about 120% capacity. It is quite common to see patients in bed cots lined up along the corridors waiting for treatment. So any change in practice that can treat patients and discharge them quickly to free up beds is very welcome.

Dr Mark Swai, Director of Hospital Services at KCMC has enthusiastically followed the development of the service and remarked on the difference it is making to bed management on the surgical wards.

Liam undertook the first laparoscopic removal of a gall bladder to be performed within Tanzania, in October 2004. This

was followed by the first removal of an appendix in 2005 and during his last visit in October 2006, the first permanent repair of a hernia.

Sue Colley, a laparoscopic specialist nurse accompanied Liam on the visits and continued the training of theatre nurses to increase their skills and confidence in dealing with complex laparoscopic procedures. She also undertook training of ward nurses in the pre and post operative care of laparoscopic patients.

Liam remains committed to his work at KCMC and says "The Tanzanian people and particularly the patients are an inspiration

for us. They remain cheerful and positive despite adversity. It is a privilege to be able to help them in even a small way."

There are grand plans for the continued development of the laparoscopic service and it is hoped that during 2007 a sponsor can be found to enable training to be moved into the next dimension, when laparoscopic procedures can be beamed by satellite from Tanzania to UK so that the Northumbria trainers can teach on line. More details about the Link can be found at www.northumbria.nhs.uk



Ghana Health Links

THE Ghana-UK Health Links workshop, which was held at the Royal College of Physicians on 21st March, 2007 was attended by about 60 participants including a four strong delegation from the Ghana Ministry of Health

and Ghana Health Service. THE workshop was followed by some excellent discussions with the Ghanaian Ministry's delegation and as a result THET will be working with them to prepare a joint Code of Practice on Links: begin

to map existing Links activity in Ghana and exploring the possibility of training more mid-level health workers.

Andrew Purkis, THET CEO, and Ajoy Datta, THET Links Co-ordinator, will travel to Ghana in early August to take this forward and make preparations for a Health Links workshop to take place in Ghana in December 2007.

Calling all specialists!

From time to time overseas partners ask for help in specialties not available to the UK partner. If you would be interested as an individual in being involved in a Link or your Link needs help from a specialist not available locally, please contact THET on 020 7290 3881, so that they can maintain a list of individuals who may be able to advise and help on a wide range of health related topics overseas.

Mental health in Malawi



Johnny Wardle, Chairman of North Yorks & York PCT, hosts a fundraiser, which is attended by Dr Moto, High Commissioner for Malawi, in the grounds of his home near Ripon. Despite torrential rain the event raised a staggering £2,500.

WHEN Jenny Travena, a specialist Mental Health Physiotherapist was invited to visit friends in Malawi in 1999, she had no idea how her perspective on life would be changed by the experience. She visited a number of hospitals in the area and was struck by the overwhelming number of patients, often on make shift beds on the floor, that needed attention. She soon understood the scale of the problem when she visited Zomba Mental Hospital (ZMH), a 332 bed psychiatric hospital located in the south of Malawi, which is the only government run specialist mental health hospital in the country. The hospital and dedicated staff made a big impact upon her and she felt that she wanted to do something positive to help.

Back in the UK, she rallied the support of colleagues and was soon raising funds to send much needed equipment. A support group was set up for the hospital and with the backing of THET, the link grew. Connections were soon

made with the Department of Health Sciences at the University of York to take the Link forward and in 2007 the Link registered with the Charities Commission.

The link has always provided opportunities for staff from ZMH to visit the UK for training. Following one particular visit, the staff were inspired to establish a dedicated specialist Children's Ward Team on their return to Malawi. The changes were modest at first but over time they were able to tailor treatment to the needs of the children by providing a secure environment, through the building of a perimeter fence, supply of appropriate clothing to protect dignity and provision of play facilities. Since then the Link has obtained funding through the Commonwealth Fellowships programme for two ZMH staff members to visit Harrogate in October 2007.

Rather more ambitiously, the Link supported the development of community mental health care.

A Day Hospital service is being developed at ZMH but sometimes the service has to compete against the harsh realities of survival when perhaps the offer of casual work at 50p a day to build a local road becomes the priority, as it will provide food for the family. Sometimes the link between ZMH and health services in the rural communities is compromised because of the unavailability of petrol for the ambulances to transport the CPNs to their work in the villages. Even so, patients who have walked for more than 6 hours to the treatment centres will come back again the following month for the next clinic.

Link members continue to provide training for Health Centre staff in identifying mental health problems in their patients. This can prevent some admissions to ZMH (and the local police cells!) and ensure that those referred are appropriate.

The Link has grown in strength and numbers over the years and still has a lot of work to do but has already had a major impact on the development of mental health services in Malawi.

Ken Randall, a Clinical Nurse Specialist at Harrogate District Hospital, says: Linking with Malawi has been incredibly rewarding for all of us. The versatility of the ZMH staff is astonishing and there is much we can learn from their approach to their work. We hope that our link with 'the warm heart of Africa' can go from strength to strength.'

If you would like to find out more about the Zomba Mental Health Link contact Dr Chris Bulmer, Project Leader by e mail: chris.bulmer@nyypct.nhs.uk

Links Competition Winners

THET would like to say a big thank you to all link members who provided details of their activities to enter the Links competition. There were many examples of how Links make an impact and the judges had a hard task to select the winners

1ST prize:

● **Hereford** – Tanzania Palliative care link
A visit to St Mary's Hospice in Hereford inspired Florence Koshuma, a nurse-midwife, to start a small Palliative Care service in Tanzania. In 2006 Muheza Hospice

Care treated and looked after 40 cancer and 4048 HIV patients, improving the quality of life of many seriously ill and dying patients.

2ND prize:

- **Brighton** – Lusaka HIV nurse education link
- **ELCMHT** (East London and City Mental Health Trust)- Butabika – Alcohol treatment
- **Nottingham** – JIMMA ICU

● Full stories are available at www.thet.org

Who's who at THET?

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VISIT www.thet.org for more information about THET and Health Links. You can use our online Link Search facility (a database of Links), find information and contacts through the Links forum and many other resources!