

Deans Individual Career Development Fund Report
Ethiopia Medical Education Partnerships Project
Visit to Wollega Medical School 13th April – 1st May 2015
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As a group of four medical students we feel extremely privileged to have been given the opportunity to accompany a group of doctors and university tutors to Ethiopia in April 2015. This was part of an ongoing link created between our medical school and Wollega Medical School in Nekemte, Ethiopia.

Background

Wollega Medical School is one of 13 new medical schools recently set up by the Ethiopian government to address the current shortage of doctors within the country. As a brand new medical school, they contacted us enquiring if we would be interested in creating a link between both medical schools to aid in each other's growth and development. The School recognised the potential of this incredible partnership and proceeded to formalise the project. Since the establishment of the link, there have been several trips to Wollega to help create, maintain and further develop this novel collaboration. Recently the University of Exeter further developed the partnership by forming the Ethiopia Medical Education Partnership Project (EMEPP) together with Wollega University, Queen Mary University of London and their Ethiopian partner, Aksum University. EMEPP submitted an application to the Tropical Health & Education Trust (THET), which gave both projects the funding to develop and maintain their links. On submission of the grant, it was suggested that a group of students should accompany subsequent trips to aid in further development of the relationship with the students at Wollega. Over the next two years University of Exeter Medical School will carry out six visits, each with its own focus and aims. We were fortunate to take part in the first of these trips, which concentrated specifically on medical education and teaching.



Entrance to Wollega University

Why we applied

We each had our own personal and professional reasons for applying to be a part of this incredible trip. Some of us have a keen interest in global health and medical education, and this trip seemed an ideal opportunity to develop these interests and learn how medicine is taught and practised in a developing country. Others saw this as an opportunity to push the boundaries of their comfort zone and experience something completely new. For all four of us this trip will help with our future careers, whether it is directly through global health experience or by developing our professional and personal qualities.

What we did

A group of consultants, junior doctors, university staff and medical students took part in this amazing and eye opening adventure to Nekemte. As the student team, our aim was to develop a relationship with the students in Ethiopia and establish a sustainable collaborative learning programme which would benefit the student bodies of both schools.

After much deliberation we developed the idea of an ethical scenario folder based around our Situation Reflective Template (SRT) forms. The decision was reached after observing and learning about their medical course, during which we realised that the curriculum was heavy in medical and theoretical knowledge however teaching in professionalism and ethics was less than in the UK. The folder includes SRT forms from our third years outlining recent situations the students have been involved with or witnessed, that highlight areas of professionalism or ethics.



Callie and Dan with Ethical Folders

understanding of global medicine.

Alongside these scenarios were several discussion questions for the Ethiopian students to use to analyse the situations. After analysis and discussion, the Ethiopian students were asked to write down their own experiences. These have now been returned to Truro where the third year students have an opportunity to consider and discuss the Ethiopian cases. We hope that this will benefit both student bodies by developing their professionalism and ethical skills and also by widening their insight and

During our time with the Ethiopian students, we found it fascinating to hear about the different patients and clinical presentations they come across in the hospital. The Ethiopian students were similarly interested in our facilities and the types of patients we see. This gave rise to the second part of this collaborative learning program,

which aims to enable students from both medical schools to share their clinical experiences. We are in the process of setting up a website, where students from both schools can upload patient cases, read the cases of others as well as discuss them. Exchanging these cases will hopefully help students appreciate different approaches to health and learn about disease presentations they may not be able to encounter within their own environment. Both student groups have been receptive to the idea and have expressed interest in providing cases for the website.

Alongside the collaborative learning project, we also had the opportunity to teach clinical examination skills to the Ethiopian students. While in Nekemte we realised that the students' theoretical knowledge was extraordinary. However, they had not had the opportunity to practice their clinical skills. So when we were asked to teach a group of students, we decided to focus on clinical examination skills. They used each other as patients and learned how to convert theory into practice. This was one of the most rewarding moments of the trip, seeing a student's face light up upon hearing breath sounds or a heartbeat. They were so grateful to us for teaching and showing them these skills. Hopefully they will continue to practise their clinical examinations on one another and possibly teach the students in the years below to do the same.



Timo teaching Clinical examinations



The gang and the patient

Additionally, we each had our own personal goals that we wanted to achieve while in Ethiopia. We also supported the work of the other members of the visiting team by teaching simulation, attending meetings and helping at the Doctors as Teachers course set up by our university staff.

Highlights

One of the evenings we invited some of the medical students to join us at our hotel; we had a wonderful evening with food, drink and interesting conversation. We had only known these students for little over a week but there was such a relaxed atmosphere with conversation flowing all evening. It was a privilege to meet these students and to be allowed into their lives and culture. They were extremely

welcoming towards us and were genuinely grateful for our commitment and work with their medical school.

While in Nekemte, not only did we meet the university staff and students, but while walking around the town we met several wonderful people. Walking to the eye clinic one day we met a lovely gentleman who was a server at the local church and studied accounting at the university. He very kindly walked us to the eye clinic and then showed us around his church. All throughout the rest of our time in Nekemte he managed to turn up one way or another, almost every day, to greet us. People were extremely friendly and would begin conversations with you in the street. They were intrigued by why we were in Nekemte and where we had come from.



Market in Nekemte



Bajaj

One thing we could not leave Ethiopia without doing was having a ride in a Bajaj. These are very small, three wheeled cars that look as if they are about to fall apart. It was definitely an experience we will not forget. You are encased in the back of the Bajaj without an escape route. All you can see is the road ahead. The engine sounds like a go-kart, struggling up every slight incline that is put in its path. However, the pride that the men have for their Bajaj is evident. They are decorated gorgeously and kept in an immaculate condition.

Eye clinic, Nekemte

In Nekemte there is an amazing project set up by an inspirational lady called Dr Chaltu. She set up an eye clinic that is subsidised for the local people. We spent a morning there and witnessed first-hand the amazing work it does for the people of Nekemte and surrounding villages. We sat in on a morning walk-in clinic. The staff saw an impressive number of patients in the time we were there. They saw everyone and anyone, from a child with nerve palsy to the elderly with cataracts. Cataracts are a huge problem in countries such as Ethiopia, which is why this facility is vital to the local population. This particular clinic could carry out up to 30 cataract surgeries each day, thus helping numerous people regain the sight they thought they had lost. We

hope that this clinic is able to continue to provide for the local community for years to come.

The future

In the future we have faith that the link will develop and blossom into a great and successful partnership. We hope that we can all stay involved and help to develop the relationships that we have begun to build.

With regards to the collaborative learning recourse we have created, this will now be taken back to Ethiopia on the next trip and returned to the students where they will analyse another SRT form and write their own. We hope to develop their analytical and reflective skills. The website for exchanging cases is being developed and will hopefully be operational for the next academic year. While back in Truro we hope to continue to broaden the students' knowledge and understanding of other cultural views. We will also stay in close contact with all the Ethiopian students we met. We will continue to support each other through our studies.



In the hospital with the students



Car rides back at the end of the day

Personal stories

Timo

I went out to Ethiopia expecting to learn about their healthcare and their challenges as well as to teach their medical students. In reality, I learned much more about myself than them and the medical students taught me things I could never even begin to explain. The Ethiopian people, especially the truly exceptional medical students I had the distinct pleasure of meeting, had a profound effect on me. They inspired me to become the best that I can be and motivated me to continue my efforts of pursuing a career in medical humanitarian aid with even more dedication than before.

One of the students said something that will remain with me for years to come: "Here, no matter how hard you work and how much you try, there is a limit to how much you can help and what you can achieve". I want to dedicate my career to changing that, with the hope of proving him wrong one day.

Callie

I wanted to get involved with this incredible project because it was completely out of my comfort zone and so different to anything I've experienced before. I hoped to improve my teaching confidence, get a different cultural insight into health and set up a sustainable learning project between our medical students and theirs. I definitely fulfilled these aims, and also made some amazing friends who I will keep in touch with. My biggest highlight was being put on the spot and teaching the students clinical examinations. During CVS exam, they knew that the carotid pulse was next in the sequence but had never felt one before so getting them to feel mine was great fun.

Daniel

I have been involved with the link between our medical school and the University of Wollega Medical School since the start of my third year; I have really enjoyed being able to travel there and meet those on the other side of this link. I wanted to experience medicine and how it is taught in a developing country. Whilst in Nekemte we saw patients in hospital wards and in theatre, taught medical students both in small groups and at the bedside and observed care in a local eye hospital.

This trip has made me think about the differences in the way resources are used in the United Kingdom in comparison to lower income parts of the world.

Annie

I applied to this project as I have always had a keen interest in medical education and I wanted to further develop this and gain an insight into the different healthcare and educational system that Ethiopia has to offer. This trip not only allowed me to explore these interests and develop my professional and teaching skills but also offered me so much personally. The students that I had the pleasure of meeting were extremely inspirational notable for the amount of work and hardship they have been through just to get into medical school and the amount they will have to face in their careers. One memory that will always stay with me was that I had the honour of meeting a young girl who had been newly diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, and having diabetes myself, this was extremely difficult. However, it has shown me how privileged I am to have the amenities and medical staff that are available through the NHS.

I have not only improved my teaching skills and broadened my understanding of global health. I have also taken away a new perspective on areas of my life. And

importantly I have taken away amazing memories and new friendships that will remain with me forever

Thanks

This trip was an extraordinary opportunity that none of us will forget in a hurry. It has developed all of us in ways that we could not describe on paper. We would just like to extend our thanks to all who helped organise this trip and make it the success that it was. We would also like to extend our thanks to the Dean's Fund for awarding us the grant that made this trip possible for us students. We all truly believe that this project will benefit both medical schools and we wish it all the success in the future and hope to keep involved in it as much as possible.

