

Tanzania – July 2009 **Bugando Hospital, Mwanza**

The Western Australian Surgical Mission sent a second team of volunteers to Mwanza, Tanzania, in July 2009. This team consisted of myself and Tony Baker, Plastic Surgeons, and Ross Ireland and Barney Creswell, Anaesthetists. Renee and Caroline, Registered Nurses from my practice, came as scrub nurses along with two recovery nurses, Phyllis and Nikki, from St John of God Hospital in Subiaco.

The duration of the mission was two weeks and it took approximately 48 hours to travel from Perth to the shores of Lake Victoria, Tanzania. We commenced work immediately with a clinic conducted in the beer garden of a small local hotel with the mining company's health workers bringing in patients from rural areas surrounding Mwanza. They consisted mainly of children and babies with cleft lip and cleft palate deformities, children with severe burns contractions that had not been treated and a few adults with unusual facial or limb deformities.



The team set up in one of the operating theatres at Bugando Hospital. Bugando is a large teaching hospital with eight operating theatres and a good range of surgical services. We set up two operating tables in one operating theatre and used a mixture of local equipment and equipment that we had brought with us from Australia. We operated for the next 10 days and performed up to eight cases per day.



As there are no plastic surgeons in this part of Tanzania, we were quite keen to teach local surgical trainees, specialist surgeons, anaesthetic technicians and nurses new skills so that they could continue our work and as such, many local staff members rotated throughout the operating theatres. We also operated on a number of patients that had been in Bugando Hospital for many months with various conditions. Tony Baker and I attended the daily surgical grand rounds and gave talks on cleft lip and cleft palate surgery and reconstructive microsurgery to the local surgeons and surgical trainees.

Part of the mission involved performing two microsurgical facial reconstructions. Normally in Australia we would have the benefit of an operating microscope which costs about a quarter of a million dollars, however, over in Tanzania we had to perform the surgery using telescopic glasses. Both operations were quite successful.



Overall the mission was a great success. We performed over 50 reconstructive operations which will make an enormous difference to the individual patients. We also spent a lot of time teaching which hopefully will make a bigger difference in the long term.

The surgical missions are funded via fundraising which is overseen by the Western Australian Surgical Mission. The fundraising is largely achieved through a single event held annually known as the Rafiki Dinner. The 2009 Rafiki Dinner was held in August at Burswood and some of my staff attended to support the fundraising efforts.

We are planning to send another surgical mission to Tanzania in November of this year which will involve travel to Dar es Salaam. In addition, we hope to send at least three surgical missions back to Tanzania in 2010 to continue this rewarding work.

