

Mead Minutes: Empowering others

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Dr. Tim Mead at work

Greetings from the Meads! We are enjoying the cool weather of Lusaka, Zambia. Yes, I know I was just in Niamey, Niger, but life keeps moving forward. I returned for a brief time to western Michigan in order to clean up, repack for another hospital, and gather my lovely wife, Jana, for another adventure. This trip is our first visit to Zambia and, thus, our first to the Beit CURE Hospital in Lusaka.

After the dusty, dry heat of Niger, the rains and greenery of Lusaka were a nice change. Wedged in the few intervening days, I even enjoyed some light snow in west Michigan and walks along Lake Michigan.

The CURE Zambia hospital was built in a multiple-building style like CURE Niger. CURE Zambia was built on a large plot of land that allows the buildings to stretch out across the campus. Red brick buildings were interconnected by covered, cement walkways. Therefore, there were freestanding children's and private wards, an operating theater block, administration, an ENT block, outpatient clinics, therapy X-ray support, maintenance areas, a kitchen, and even a guest house. The open spaces were filled with thick, green grass, bushes, and trees, creating a beautiful campus.

Even though CURE Zambia had its own unique look, the evidence of CURE International was clear throughout. Bright, clean buildings with a smiling, talented CURE staff placed the stamp of CURE boldly on the work. Children with familiar physical deformities filled the wards and clinics as I toured the facility. I listened to CURE staff share their stories and have found similarities across the globe. The dedication and the pride was evident in their work. The blending of spiritual and medical work was well integrated.

I was enjoying a walking tour with Dr. Moyo, a CURE Orthopedic Surgeon, when we were stopped by a family. Their smiles were huge as they showed us just how well their son was doing. Handshakes and hugs made the encounter special. I was doubly blessed. Why? Let me share what I consider an important part of CURE International's vision: education.

When we first joined CURE and arrived in Kijabe, Kenya, in 1998, there were no orthopedic training programs in Kenya. Missionaries often dream of working themselves out of a job. I have heard many stories of training going on, but there is one deficiency I see commonly. I have heard of doctors who have founded nursing training programs and medical assistant programs to improve local, medical care. Those are noble and worthwhile projects, but they will not work you out of a job.

To truly set this goal, you must train and empower someone else who can do all you can do. An orthopedic surgeon needs to create a training program to educate, mentor, and equip other orthopedic surgeons. These orthopedic surgeons need to be recognized by their country as the specialists they have become. Anything less and you will need to be replaced by someone from the outside, or the mission may fail. The same applies for an

administrator, a pastor, a pilot, a chef, or a king. If you dedicate yourself to something close to your heart, you must soon consider, “What happens when I leave, retire, or die?” The end will come all too quickly if you fail to plan.

From the beginning, CURE International made a conscious choice to train others. Dr. Joseph Theuri was the first to join as a “trainee, resident, and clinical officer.” What a bold step on Theuri’s part! CURE was a new mission and the exact plans of training were not clear at the time. Slowly, the way forward unfolded. The only real orthopedic training program in the region was in Kampala, Uganda.

Theuri gleaned all the basics of orthopedic surgery and mentored in the ESP (emotional/spiritual/physical) care that is CURE for a three-year period in Kijabe, Kenya. Each year, another doctor was added, growing the numbers. Theuri then moved on and started his “official” training. Currently, Dr. Theuri is the Medical Director and Senior Orthopedic Surgeon at CURE Kenya.

Several years passed following this same routine. After many meetings, false starts, closed doors, and applications, CURE became part of the first orthopedic residency in Kenya. No longer would doctors have to leave Kenya to gain certification. [COSECSA](#) orthopedics was born. COSECSA is the College of Surgeons of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa. The training was under the guidance of the University of Edinburgh. The creation was due to a large part because of the work of Dr. Chris Lavy, a British orthopedic surgeon, who served at CURE Malawi. COSECSA is an amazing multinational educational effort for Africa.

But I digress. What was the double blessing? The first was the joy of seeing a restored, healthy child. The second? The child’s doctor, Dr. Moyo, was a trainee at CURE Kenya. Dr. Moyo performed his first orthopedic case with me there. Dr. Moyo spent three years with CURE Kenya, succeeded in Kampala, and has now been serving at CURE Zambia. I love to see the success of others where I have had a small role in their training.

In 2011, we were able to confidently leave CURE Kenya, having worked myself out of a job. A cadre of well-trained, talented Kenyan orthopedic surgeons and an ongoing orthopedic residency program made the dream come true. Not only was I able to leave, but those trained were training, mentoring, and empowering others.

CURE International invests time, effort, and resources not only in providing for the emotional, spiritual, and physical health of today’s children, but also investing in growing qualified and inspired providers for the future. Together, we can grow and prosper in His grip.