

Interplast UK

Annual Meeting of Trustees

Friday 19th July 2013

Chairman's Report

Since it is only seven months since we last met, I have a somewhat shorter than usual report to bring. However, since then, we have had a surgical camp to Kashmir in May and a further trip to Uganda in October is in the planning stage at this moment. The proposed Sri Lanka trip in June was postponed and a future trip to Nepal is halted due to the death of Viral's father in law, who was organizing things over there.

So, I will take this opportunity, as a team member, to bring an overview of the Kashmir trip. I feel it to be a great privilege to work in this way and such a delight to see the absolute joy of parents seeing their child transformed following surgery to correct deformities such as cleft lip and palate. In the case of one mother, her emotion was so great that she almost fainted in amazement. So, we give thanks to Mr. Viva on using his great skill in this way and his willingness in continuing to gather together and lead a team of people in order to provide free treatment for some of the world's poorest patients.

A team of Doctors and Nurses embarked on Interplast's second visit to the community hospital at Mirpur, at the invitation of KIRF (Kashmir International Relief Fund). This organization instigated health care provision for the local community and continues to fund both patients' treatment and the running costs of this hospital. Our team was a mixture of new and established members. Mr. Viva, Consultant Surgeon, and Thomas, a surgeon with experience from previous trips, were able to work simultaneously in one operating theatre as two operating tables were in use. KIRF invited Javad, a young Dr. from Denmark, whose family came from Kashmir, to assist with the surgery. The rest of the team consisted of Ghalib and Shaima, Anaesthetists, Tanya and Sue Theatre Nurses, Geraldine, on her first trip worked with me as Ward Nurse. Dr. Almas became an adopted member of our team; this young Kashmiri woman worked tirelessly helping on the ward and outpatient clinic almost wearing out her voice with constant use of her translation skills. Her family was exceptionally kind to us; we enjoyed a wonderful meal with them and the ladies were given a 'made to measure' traditional outfit, a Salwar Kameez.

A phenomenal number of people, a sea of patients desperate to see the Doctor, were waiting to be seen immediately on our arrival. Many had travelled great distances to the hospital; one man had carried his son for a full day before reaching a point where he could get transportation. Mr. Viva began the task of screening hundreds of people and worked late into the

evening. This screening process continued each day by interspersing it with operating duties. A local ENT surgeon and some junior doctors visited the hospital during our stay to observe various operating procedures.

The Interplast visit had been widely advertised but unfortunately not specific enough regarding the conditions we could treat. Some were disappointed because they had come with problems where surgery was not an appropriate treatment or needed the expertise of another specialty, others were too malnourished or had other complications, but many others with cleft lip/palate, burn contractures, hypospadias and keloid scars were treated. 126 operation over 11 operating days meant working very long hours to meet the demand. The youngest patient was 3 months old, the eldest 55 years old. The children were delighted to receive donated soft toys and sweets as were many families who received financial help for food and transport costs by a generous donation from Mr. Javed. Due to the huge number of patients in the population needing repair of cleft lip/palate, the hospital has requested help from the smile train charity, they will employ a doctor to do regular sessions throughout the year,

After a difficult start with our accommodation we moved to another site and soon settled in together. Mr. Ifti, a local man, joined us for breakfast each morning before transporting us to the hospital. We were also delighted by the supportive surprise visits of Mr. Javed and also from someone we had met on previous visits to Islamabad. We all had a wonderful relaxing day off hosted by a contact of a friend of Mr. Viva's.

We saw some of the local countryside, had a boat trip on the lake and enjoyed a wonderfully prepared barbeque.

Many people benefited from this mission, we also had a great team and worked well together so thanks to everyone who worked so hard. Due to the huge number of patients in the population needing repair of cleft lip/palate, work will carry on throughout the year by the Smile Train charity, they will employ a doctor to do regular sessions at the hospital.

Best wishes and thank you to all who support and contribute in many different ways to make the work of Interplast possible.

Christine Brewer, Chairperson

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