

I finished my days at Phebe Hospital in Liberia tying up loose ends - or at least trying to do so - like trying to help finishing up the details of a USAID grant that would help support the payroll at Phebe for a year, creating an automatic deduction form for the bank, checking on prices for chemicals to make IV solutions, trying to find spare parts, continuing to work on the Internet connection (yes, that became a problem again!), and emailing curriculum for nursing programs. The sad thing is, nothing goes smoothly and everything takes work. As the Liberians say, "It isn't easy."

My flight from Liberia to Nairobi, Kenya, went smoothly and the car trip to the hospital where I was to stay was fine except for the part where traffic came to a halt behind a truck stuck in the mud just half a mile from hospital. They sent a car to the other side of the stuck truck and I was on my way. I stayed in the guest quarters of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on the hospital campus - a congregation of Indian sisters who fed me well on Indian food which I had been missing.

The next day I had a chance to meet a friend who also was in Kenya that week. She is a fellow missionary from the Episcopal Church that I met in Liberia. She's an agricultural specialist, now working in Southern Sudan. We met for a cup of tea and 90 minutes of catching up at a retreat she was attending nearby the hospital. Then, I was on my way to Cameroon. My plane landed in the capital city of Yaoundé late evening and it would have been handy to have been able to speak French when I went through immigration! We (two Regional Reps and my Chicago boss) left by car the next morning for a two day drive to Ngaoundere and the hospital where the three doctors from India will be serving this summer.

Cameroon is more developed than Liberia at least as far as roads and electricity. I met with the bishop of the Lutheran Church in Cameroon and the Bishop from South Dakota - their companion synod - who was there for a visit. And I met with the surgeon/missionary, Dr. Jim, and his wife who is a nurse. They are from South Carolina and he's retired Navy. I also met with the head of the Health Unit/Department of the Cameroon Lutheran Church and the palliative care team. There are a lot of traffic accidents - mostly from motorcycles - and so there is a lot of orthopedic work. I am hoping to find an orthopedic surgeon at CMC who would be willing to spend some time there teaching the residents. I went on surgical rounds with Dr. Jim, and then met up with the palliative care team - a nurse and a social worker. I was impressed with them, despite their limited formal training.

I wanted to go on home visits with the palliative care team, but they go on motorcycles and I wanted no part of the crazy cyclists of Ngaoundere, so I arranged to borrow a car and driver. We visited two older men who had suffered strokes. The first lived in a magnificent old house that was in a sad state of disrepair. I was able to help the team solve a couple of his pain related problems. The second man lived in a mud house. He was 72 years old and the father of 12 children, ages 3-30.

He spent his days in a dark room on a mattress on the floor. I suggested that a raised bed would help him be able to sit up and maybe get out of bed, but I'm not sure they had the money or even the interest. I got a feel for what they know and maybe I can help plan some future training. There are people from Global Health Ministries at the end of the summer so I hope I can help come up with a program of some sorts.

Then it was time to begin my journey back to India. The two day trip back to Yaoundé went well - I would have said smoothly, but it was often quite bumpy! The airport there in the capital is new and beautiful and mostly empty as there is more traffic in and out of another city called Douala. I had a night flight to Nairobi and then a night flight to India. It was good to be back in Vellore, but it is definitely summer here and very hot! I got home during a power cut, but once the power came back on, I could turn on the A/C and that was very welcome.

The end of June, I will leave for the US and my home leave and I will see many of you during that time. Please keep me in your prayers - those prayers fuel my work! Peace, John.