

Case Study 7: “Partnership with Bwindi Community Hospital, Uganda”

For the last 5 years the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) has had a partnership with Bwindi Community Hospital (BCH) in rural south west Uganda.

The RCGP has an international strategy to support primary care globally and has direct links with several overseas placements.

15 years ago an American family doctor started an outreach clinic under a tree after being asked to help the impoverished local community who were cut off from health care. Since handing over to Ugandan colleagues Bwindi has rapidly developed into a 130 bed hospital serving a population of 100,000 with patients coming from the whole district (a population of 300,000). There are now 5000 inpatient and 43,000 outpatient attendances a year.

There are two rural clinics and a dedicated community outreach service. This team works with village health volunteers with focus on preventative medicine. Activities include immunisation, family planning, nutrition, HIV, mental health and substance abuse. In 2014 the hospital built a nursing school which now has 250 students and it plans to build a clinical officer training school in two years.

Annual operating expenses are £900,000. The hospital is partly funded by the Ugandan Ministry of Health with support from grants and individual donors. In addition it has developed an eQuality health insurance scheme for the local community which has 27,000 members. All services are heavily subsidised to ensure the poorest of the poor access healthcare.

In 2013 two Scottish GPs volunteering at Bwindi were asked by the hospital's management committee to request a partnership with the RCGP. The goal was to have an ongoing medical presence at BCH to assist with clinical care and quality improvement activities. The Junior International Committee of the RCGP supported this and since 2013 there has been an annual recruitment of two GPs to spend a year at Bwindi.

We work on the principle of friendship and listening to what is needed. Since 2013 there has been a continuous presence of two family doctors spending a year in Bwindi then handing onto two new colleagues as part of the partnership agreement. Family doctors report that the year was transformative in terms of personal and professional development and after completing their year all are back working as GPs in the NHS.

Partnership activities include

- Clinical care of inpatients and outpatients
- Clinical teaching to medical and nursing staff
- Writing/updating hospital guidelines
- Development of mental health and chronic care clinics
- Coordination of the Confidential Enquiry into Child and Maternal Mortality
- Developing family planning training which was awarded THET funding and has trained over 250 staff with uptake by three other hospitals
- Creation of an alcohol rehabilitation services and Alcoholics Anonymous groups with 52 active members
- Publication of five peer reviewed papers

The hospital's management committee would like to build links with the Scottish Citizenship programme and become a recognised Health Partnership.

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