

GHANA SEPTEMBER 2017

TETTEH QUARSHIE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL



TQMH- It Feels Like Coming Home

On September 20, 2017, ISHI marked its 21st mission and returned to Tetteh Quarshie Memorial Hospital (TQMH) in Mampong, Ghana for the fifth time. On the clinical side of our mission, ISHI expanded upon the work that was initiated during prior missions. From a surgical standpoint, we performed 61 surgeries. As with all missions, there was didactic and clinical education and an exchange of knowledge between the ISHI volunteers and clinical staff at TQMH.

"You will frequently hear from the locals "Alwaaba"- meaning you are welcome and 'this is your home' when you arrive in Akuapem and TQMH. While these are often just niceties in a lot of places, you actually feel it in Ghana. From the patients, to the hospital staff, to the local tribal leaders and population...all make you feel as a volunteer that you are wanted, appreciated, and really making a difference."- Dr. Pete Johnston – Global Surgery Fellow

While that aspect of ISHI's missions isn't unique, the strong professional and personal relationships that are developed with each subsequent TQMH mission are. ISHI is always greeted with welcoming arms from the TQMH staff, the Nana and Nellie, our liaison in Ghana. Whether it is your first time in Ghana for a mission or your fifth, the feeling is the same...like you are coming home. ISHI would like to thank everyone at TQMH for working alongside our volunteers to make our goal of providing free surgery to the underserved possible. The entire staff at the hospital fosters an environment that allows ISHI to expand on our initiatives, maximize the number of free surgeries we can perform and most importantly, feel like we are coming back home. We look forward to returning to TQMH in 2018 for our 6th Ghana Mission.

- Tetteh Quarshie Memorial Hospital
- Mampong, Ghana
- Mission Dates
Sept 20-30, 2017

- Mission Leader-
Dr. Ziad Sifri
- 29 volunteers



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Five billion people across the globe lack surgical care. Many treatable conditions become diseases that lead to high fatality rates. Timely and affordable access to surgical intervention is lacking in many underdeveloped countries around the world. The mission of ISHI is to provide free surgical care to underserved communities, worldwide, regardless of race, religion, politics, geography or financial considerations. To date, ISHI has performed over 1300 free surgeries. We believe the numbers are not as important as the impact we have on each and every patient we perform surgery on. As you will read in the patient stories that follow, giving someone back their joy, livelihood, dignity, vocation, financial freedom and most importantly, their health, is the ultimate benefit of global surgery, one that ISHI is proud to have a part in. While the patient is recipient of the surgical intervention, the benefit of free surgery extends outward to the family and even the community at large.



Isaac A: 20 year old rabbit farmer and young man of many diversified skills ranging from construction to clothing designer

Surgery: Right Inguinal Hernia Repair with Mesh

Diagnosis: Congenital Inguinal Hernia

Isaac was born with a right inguinal hernia that didn't affect him until approximately 3-4 years ago. His hernia became progressively larger and more painful ultimately compromising his ability to work. Self-treatment with Ghanaian herbal leaves and honey did little to relieve his pain. Two years ago, he was quoted a price of 1000 cedis (\$225 USD) for the surgery, an amount he states he "could never afford on his salary." During that time, he worked two jobs; one in construction doing masonry work and also as a seamstress making clothing. He humbly shared with us that he designed and hand sewed the ethnic shorts he was wearing in the hospital. A head designer was teaching him everything he needed to know about designing and sewing clothing with the eventual goal of opening up his own clothing store. Just six months shy of achieving that goal, Isaac's pain became so insufferable that he eventually quit his work in construction and gave up the idea of opening up his own clothing shop. Still needing a source of income, he decided to focus on farming and breeding rabbits for eventual sales. He proudly shows us pictures of his rabbits and shares with us that he loves them so much, he has decided not to sell any of the 17 rabbits he owns.

He comes to ISHI by way of a nurse from TQMH who lives near him and told him about ISHI's campaign for free surgery. Like so many other ISHI patients, he tells us that if it weren't for ISHI providing free surgery, he would not have been able to afford the surgery. Isaac was a keen observer in all aspects of his life. He learned a great deal just by watching others whether it be farming, sewing or construction. He tells us he "watched the doctors closely while waiting his turn in triage" and commented on how "hard" everyone was working to see as many patients in the same circumstances as he was in. He reports, "I could just tell you were trying to help as many people as possible." He feels grateful for the surgery and reports he already feels stronger. As his nurse, Michala, prepares him for discharge, he states, "life is good now, may God watch all of you and bless you." He will concentrate on farming but will have to find another means of an income. He loves his 17 rabbits too much to sacrifice any of them for a few cedis.

ISHI Volunteers "know how to be patient with the patient. My nurse made me laugh and always checked on me."

"Life is good now"- Isaac A

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"Music gives a soul to the universe,
Wings to the mind,
Flight to the imagination,
And life to everything" - Plato

Michaela Jorin NP (Left)

Emmanuel A (Right)

Dr. Surnimal Ghosh (Surgeon not pictured)



With a smile like Emmanuel's you can't help but to be drawn to him. As I sat down to speak with him about his surgical experience with ISHI, I knew instantly, there was something deeper that motivated him to have surgery. That 'something' was his love and devotion to music. "Music is a piece of art that goes in the ears and straight to the heart"-unknown. One can just tell that music lived in Emmanuel's heart yet there was a void there- one created by his inability to play because of pain from his hernia.

Emmanuel is 31 years old and has lived with an inguinal hernia for 14 years. In 2008, he was told his surgery would cost him 1500 GHS, which is the equivalent of approximately \$345 USD. At that time, he did not have health insurance and only worked part time as a teacher. He did his best to raise money for his surgery and even received money from the owner of the school where he was a teacher. Despite his best efforts, he just couldn't raise enough money and put the notion of the surgery out of his mind. A family member, who had surgery with ISHI several years ago, told him about the free surgeries ISHI performs yearly at TQMH. He was in school furthering his education and teaching at the same time and felt he couldn't take a break to have the surgery.

Two years ago, Emmanuel's pain became so unbearable, it prevented him from not only working, but also from enjoying what he loves most, music. Emmanuel plays the drums and keyboard for a band and his church. His face immediately lights up just talking about music. He thoroughly educated me on the different types of Ghanaian drums. His other love is volleyball. He plays for a competitive team but has been unable to play for over a year because of the pain. He reports the pain has been so debilitating the last six-months; there were times he couldn't go to work for 3-4 days and would just lie in bed the whole day. He found medication to have no effect in relieving the pain. The pain caused by his hernia also prevented him from playing with his 3-year-old daughter. All the things that brought joy to Emmanuel's life were absent because of the pain caused by a hernia- one he couldn't afford to have surgically repaired.

Not wanting to live a life of pain that kept him from the things he loved most, family, music, volleyball and teaching, he finally decided to pursue surgery with ISHI during our most recent mission in September. "ISHI gave me a 5-star treatment and they are the best!" He reports he had an excellent experience with every volunteer he met and was especially impressed with how much everyone genuinely cared and listened to how he was feeling. He was all smiles in the ward and reported he finally didn't have pain. He looks forward to being able to carry his daughter, teach full time, join his volleyball team and of course, play music with his band and the church. He even made a promise to "repay" ISHI back by performing for us on the next mission. Repayment is not necessary since every surgery ISHI performs is free but we will hold him to that performance next year! Making a difference in the quality of a patient's life is the ultimate validation that ISHI has a lasting impact on every surgery we perform. It would be our pleasure to watch Emmanuel perform and witness him being able to finally do what brings him immense joy- play music.



-Alberta A
-Surgery: Total
Abdominal
Hysterectomy
-Surgeon:
Dr. Kevin Clarke

“I want people to
stop asking me if I
am pregnant”-
Alberta



At 46 years old, Alberta was frustrated by the amount of times people asked her if she was pregnant. Already a mother of 2 grown children, 18 and 16 years old, she was tired of people looking “at her stomach” and making the assumption she was pregnant.

Alberta was diagnosed with fibroids 4 years ago after having intractable abdominal pain. She considered surgery but at the time, the hospital was on strike and all surgeries were cancelled. Since she didn’t have pain that compromised her ability to work, she did not pursue the surgery. However, over the last couple of years, as the fibroids grew, her pain worsened. Despite the increasing pain, she continued to work. She is a single parent and provides for her children to afford them the opportunity to attend college. She did become more exasperated at the comments people made towards her about her girth.

She heard about ISHI through a friend who had a prior surgery by Dr. Clarke. She reports she came specifically for Dr. Clarke and feels fortunate that the timing worked out; otherwise she would have waited another year to have the surgery. Above right is a picture of the large fibroid removed from Alberta’s uterus. While the surgeon explained it will take some time for the swelling to reduce before there is a noticeable difference in her abdominal girth, Alberta expressed her deep appreciation for ISHI and looks forward to “not looking pregnant” in the near future.

It is important to recognize that some conditions such as Alberta’s may not affect one’s ability to work but rather have a social impact or stigma that is no less important. Societal norms and culture often dictate gender roles in underdeveloped countries such as Ghana. Gender inequalities in underdeveloped countries are well documented in the field of Global Health. Alberta is the provider for her family and works as a public servant, something that she worked very hard at and was clearly proud of. The implication of being mistaken for a pregnant woman in her late forties was rightfully concerning to her and is one of the main factors that ultimately led her to get the surgery. The surgery ISHI performed gave dignity back to a patient to allow her the confidence to stand tall and be a financial provider for her children without the social stigma of looking pregnant.

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Collaboration beyond Surgery-

As with all ISHI missions, we feel it is equally important to go beyond just providing free surgeries. To that end, our Ghana 2017 mission included lectures from nurses, Emergency Medicine doctors and a Trauma surgeon. Several ISHI volunteers also took part in didactic, hands-on teaching, simulation model education, advancing options for future video conferencing; hospital equipment needs assessment, and donating birthing kits. Below are the highlights of the collaboration in education and beyond that took place at TQMH during the ISHI mission.



Top: Lanika Tucker RN- Stroke Assessment

Bottom: Sol Muniz RN- Basic Trauma Assessment

Not pictured- Additional lectures:

Dr. Ziad Sifri- Critical Care Updates; Dr. Lana Shaker- Gestational Diabetes; Dr. Georgia Davies- Pregnancy Induced Hypertension; Dr. Enoch Obeng- Scrotal Masses/ Hernia; Drs. Lana Shaker and Georgia Davies- Diabetes/ Diabetic Ketoacidosis and Hepatitis

Hands on teaching:

Dr. Akia Caine, Dr. Lana Shaker, Dr. Georgia Davies, Dr. Enoch Obeng, Lanika Tucker RN, Sol Muniz RN, Vickey Patel PT



Left: Dr. Akia Caine and Dr. Lana Shaker testing the Endoscopy Simulation Model of the Gastrointestinal tract. ISHI volunteers built this model using local supplies and then donated it to TQMH doctors to allow them the opportunity to practice performing an endoscopy with a "life-like" GI tract.

Bottom Left: Renae Adamson RN (3rd from left) packaged and donated birthing kits for the TQMH Maternity Ward.



- ◆ ISHI in collaboration with Rutgers NJ Medical School and University Hospital expanded their initiative to provide TQMH video conferencing. We hope to use the video conferencing for lectures, an eventual ELibrary, advanced teaching opportunities and future mission planning.

- ◆ Through TQMH's relationship with ISHI, AMREF Health Africa (NGO committed to strengthening health systems in Africa) donated \$50,000 to the hospital. Dr. Ziad Sifri, Nellie Kemevor (our Ghana liaison/ coordinator) and Dr. Albert Benneh (Medical Superintendent of TQMH) identified key medical and surgical supplies, which will be purchased with the donated money.

Written By: Vickey Patel PT