

NURSING ON THE ORTHOPAEDIC WARD IN OCTOBER 2007
AT THE ST JOSEPH HOSPITAL, KOFORIDUA. GHANA

By Marian Ekuia Dickson

I trained in Ghana in Nursing and have worked on orthopaedic trauma wards in England for some time. Going back to practice orthopaedic trauma in Ghana for the first time in four years felt like my first trip to the UK to practice Nursing. Questions with few answers? The Motec colleagues travelling with me in October emphasised that I was the first ward nurse to pay voluntary working visit to Koforidua. That did not help matters except the calm re-assuring words of the pioneers of the working visit. 'You will be alright', said the Motec Vice President, I was told.

And truly, I was alright at Koforidua. Interaction with the nursing staff was excellent. Rapport with the patients in the various Ghanaian languages and English was very helpful. Very little time in this part of my role to see as many doctors as I saw in England. Indeed there are fewer doctors.

I teamed up with the resident nurses and Motec Physiotherapist and got on with my job. It wasn't long before I felt the shortage of nurses. Everywhere really- on the male, female and the children's ward, yet the resident staff carried on working their hearts out. Equipment was limited, manual handling was not as safe as I would have liked it to be. Personal hygiene education of patients, exchange of ideas with local staff, medicating patients in a different way, pre and post op monitoring exchange of ideas, pushing for early post operative ambulation, educating nursing students were among my daily routines on the wards.

I could go on and on. All told, training of orthopaedic nurses to support the load of work at St Joseph's Hospital must be given a serious thought. Motec has been concentrating on infection control but I also think that manual handling needs to be tackled through local training using local materials if available. I can say that my experience in Ghana has been that of a pleasant exhaustion but after some rest, I am almost ready and willing to go again. Gratitude the MIDA, my host authority, nursing staff and patients alike who made my stay a wonderful one. Motec-Bravo!