

## MAKING GOOD USE OF HEALTH VOLUNTEERS IN GHANA

Philip J. Forson. Ghanaian Times 11<sup>th</sup> June 2008

A group of orthopedic specialists from the United Kingdom based charity organisation, Motec Life -UK, are in the country as part of its outreach health programme to some selected health institutions in Ghana.

Motec is a voluntary health organization made up of professionals from different medical disciplines with over 90 members who are mostly Ghanaians and other Nationals resident in Britain and other countries including Holland, Germany and Canada.

The organization's activities in Ghana dates back eighteen months ago during which period it has consistently provided free medical care, medical equipment and transfer of expertise to the staff of its target hospitals in the Eastern, Western, and the Greater Accra regions.

Last year, Motec held its maiden public lecture in Accra to commemorate Ghana's Golden Jubilee celebration. At the lecture, the president of Motec Mr. Paul Ofori-Atta (an Orthopaedic surgeon) proposed the establishment of a National Orthopaedic Centre of Excellence as a model in the West African sub-region to cater for the numerous avoidable morbidities and fatalities associated with orthopaedic trauma conditions in Ghana. He lamented over the sorry state of trauma care in the country especially at a time when the World Health Organisation is saying clearly and loudly that there should be at least basic trauma care for all anywhere in the world. Ghana must be able to look after her citizens and cater for the large number of the booming tourist population who would expect the minimum of basic care to minimize the inconvenience of flying them out of the country for better care elsewhere.

The President's idea was given a prompt backing by the rector of the Ghana College of physicians and surgeons, Professor Paul Nyame who even suggested that, such a National Centre of Excellence should be located at the Joseph Hospital in Koforidua which has a distinguished achievement as an orthopaedic specialist health facility in the country.

Motec's voluntary health supports in Ghana is also being transformed into education and training of staff in their contact hospitals in the country. Again, in collaboration with a UK medical manufacturing giant, CorinUK, there is a sponsorship package for Ghanaian orthopaedic surgeons to attend International Orthopaedic Trauma Conference and Educational tours in Europe.

The latest to secure such benefit from CorinUK is Dr. Emmanuel Agbemey, an orthopaedic surgeon at the Volta River Authority hospital at Akosombo in the Eastern Region. He completed a two week comprehensive educational tour of England where he undertook a rare training experience with orthopaedic "supremos" in that country.

In acknowledging the gesture from Motec and CorinUK, Dr. Agbemey submitted that, "the trip to the UK has exposed me to many forms of current orthopaedic interventions that are truly applicable to our young population afflicted by orthopaedic trauma disease conditions."

Motec`s annual outreach support in Ghana started this month with a shipping of a 20 foot container loaded with medical materials to be supplied to Motec target hospitals in the country.

The President of Motec, Dr. Ofori-Atta observed that, “Ghanaian corporate institutions should respond to the call of helping to finance the shipping cost to enable them bring into the country as many as possible the needed medical equipments and materials they receive as donations from their contacts in the UK”. He continued, “Ghanaians have a dream of a solid healthy state of hope, brotherliness, peace, love, friendship which we must all play a part to make our dreams come true”.

Recently in the UK, a Ghanaian Day was celebrated by Motec, in which the paramount chief of the New Juaben traditional area, Daasebre Professor (Emeritus) Oti Boateng was a special guest.

Daasebre spoke about his admiration of the effort by Motec to support health care improvements in Ghana and pledged his support for well meaning initiatives by voluntary health workers from the Diaspora. He also stressed on the importance of maintaining good health through activities like regular exercise.

It was also announced at the ceremony that, Daasebre has accepted to be one of the patrons for the charity organization. The acceptance makes him the Ghanaian counterpart of Professor Lord Alton of the House of Lords, who is the patron in the UK.

Whiles in the country, the medical team will work at the St. Joseph hospital in Koforidua, Nkawkaw Holy Family, Volta River Authority and the Lister Hospitals in Accra and Akosombo respectively. Motec intends to intensify its educational and training drive across the spectrum of various hospital staff and particularly to consolidate the collaboration with targeted Nursing training Institutions in Ghana. The organisation is also considering the establishment of a Surgical Centre at Asafo Sefwi in the Western region to cover education, training and the provision of surgical services to treat hernias, varicosed veins, cataract, gynaecological, trauma, minor plastic and ear nose and throat conditions afflicting the people in the Sefwi Asafo area.

In order for the experience of the people of Ghana and Motec to filter through to boost health care improvements in Ghana, Motec intends to share ideas with health policy makers in the country (Ministry of Health), among others. Motec has suggested modification of the Medical Assistants training to include basic trauma care, some clinical responsibilities to in-patients where doctor to patient ratio is sadly and abysmally unsafe. Review of the retiring age for professionals so as to maintain satisfactory levels of experience on the job is another area Motec believes Ghana could do better.

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