GRID & NEA

sustainable development in Ghana

Exchanging Gifts With Friends

BY DR. JENNIFER WILSON, MD CCFP

The 2010 Ghana Health Team has completed the mission.

What a privilege for us to come alongside the NEA team to provide the gift of medical, surgical, dental, optical care and health education to our global neighbours in Northern Ghana.

Until the infrastructure for health care is in place for this region, health teams play a key role in providing life-saving, life-changing medical relief to thousands of patients. Our teams are one aspect of an extensive, holistic community development program run by GRID/NEA under the leadership of Dr. David and Brenda Mensah.

This was our fourth annual mission. Our Ghanaian partners and our patients have become more than our "global neighbours" -- they are our friends. They refer to us as their sons and daughters, their sisters and brothers. They shower us with gifts of rams, yams, fruits, vegetables and eggs.

Our team members from Canada, UK, Italy and Ghana sense that we have been part of something unique and very special. Together our countries are making a significant impact on the extreme poverty that has plagued the North for so long.

It is hard to put into words all that transpired over our two weeks in Northern Ghana. For now, we will let some pictures tell the stories. To me, these pictures tell a beautiful story of how God works in and through little people like us to give the gift of health care to people who have become friends.

Dr. Adjoa Jennifer

Adjoa means "born on Monday"

Team leader Dr. Jennifer Wilson received a guinea fowl and a shirt from Ghanaian friends as an expression of gratitude for the team's help.

Team Numbers

Expatriate Members	46
Ghanaian Members	82
Clinics	9
Patients	9000
Surgeries	206

GRID (Ghana Rural Integrated Development) and NEA (Northern Empowerment Association) are partner organizations working to alleviate poverty in Northern Ghana. Motivated by Christ's love, our mission is to assist poor communities to meet their basic needs in a sustainable manner. You can learn more at grid-nea.org.

The 2010 Ghana Health Team

Rapid malaria tests by finger prick being performed by ER nurse Shannon Brandon.

Dr. Sarah Barclay examining a robust infant with an umbilical hernia while local medical assistant Ernestina looks on.

Dentist Kyle Chin and assistant Amanda Bartodziej cared for several times the number of patients per day that they would see in a typical day in their Uxbridge clinic.

Dr. Martin McDowell is the first optometrist to ever provide optical care in Northern Ghana.

Hundreds of patients came to each clinic.

Families would travel long distances and find creative ways to bring their sick loved ones to the team.

Dentist Kyle Chin and cardiac surgeon Charles Peniston working together to relieve the pain of a large abscess.

Nurse Joan Maguire starting an IV on a critically ill teenager with necrotizing fasciitis (flesh-eating disease) of his leg.

Joshua almost died of pneumonia when the team was in Ghana in 2009. Joshua's parents Peter and Lydia presented the robust toddler to the team along with gifts of thanks.

Nurse Kelly Bruce was one of 12 nurses who played a key role in all aspects of the clinic.

Canadian anesthesiologist Dr. Ira Bloom monitoring a young patient recovering from hernia surgery.

Optical nurse Marion Hurlburt screening patients to determine who needs to be seen by the optometrist.

Our nurses screened and registered patients, collected vital signs, ran the lab, ran a nursing station for the critically ill and dispensed drugs in our pharmacy!

With the perfect pair of used glasses, this four-year old was able to see her fingers for the first time.

Physiotherapists Karen Graham and Robyn Synnott joined our multidisciplinary team of health providers this year.

The team of five pharmacists and 2 local translators.

Field Notes

BY JACQUES LAPOINTE, GRID CHAIRMAN

What would it be like to actually be part of the Ghana Medical Team?

That's a question that my wife Brigitte and I discussed when GRID-NEA Director Dr. David Mensah suggested that we visit Ghana with the team. We had visited Northern Ghana several times already, but our trips usually revolved around planning and evaluating. We hadn't done as much of the "heavy lifting." So when we committed to the trip we asked that we could go as participants rather than observers only.

After undergoing some basic training for our roles on the "eye team", we left for Ghana a week before the full team. Our first job was to help the Mensahs with the logistics involved with lodging, feeding, and transporting more than 45 visitors and their supplies to Carpenter and remote village clinics.

Effectively deploying Canadian volunteer healthcare professionals to run massive clinics in rural African villages for two weeks is the goal of this multi-disciplinary team. Led each year by Dr. Jennifer Wilson, an Uxbridge Ontario physician, GRID Board member, and mother of five young children, the team leaders started their work a year in advance. Reviewing participant applications, raising funds, acquiring necessary equipment and medicines and providing training were only a few items on this group's extensive planning checklists.

Similarly, a group of hernia surgeons and volunteer staff from Operation Hernia, a UK based organization, had prepared their visit to coincide with the arrival of the Canadian team.

This preparation on three continents was fulfilled when we all came together at NEA's project centre in Carpenter the evening of Sunday October 31st. By lunchtime the next day, 7500 lbs of equipment, medical supplies, a full pharmacy, surgical instruments and gowns, and 2800 eye glasses had been unpacked, organized, set up and ready for the first patients at the compound. All of those weekends of preparation permitted the team to be fully effective only hours after their arrival.

Over the next 10 days a familiar daily routine set in for everyone. Up at dawn, with bags of supplies replenished and the trucks loaded, we were ready to move out to the villages. Typically the team set up in a school or clinic facility, the local church building, and shady trees within an hour of its arrival in a village and was ready to see the first of hundreds of waiting patients. With only a short lunch break the clinics ran non-stop in hot muggy weather until late afternoon, with the last prescription usually dispensed well after dark. Then we piled back into buses to return to Carpenter where we would enjoy dinner, share a few highlights from the different teams and prepare supplies for the next day before heading to bed exhausted. Two of the villages where clinics were held were quite remote and involved some hours of travel over very rough roads. In fact, Yaara, one of these villages, was so difficult to access that we needed to sleep over there to avoid extra hours of travel.

Each person on the team had an important role to play. Everyone used his or her experience and training to bring help to people who could never have otherwise accessed such quality healthcare. At the end of the last clinic day, while everyone could have complained of exhaustion and weariness, we saw smiles of satisfaction on most faces. They had accomplished what they had come to do, what they and their families had sacrificed for, knowing that thousands of people would be better off because of their time in this remote place.

As we headed back to Canada after all the packing had been done and the goodbyes exchanged I couldn't help reflect on the fact that the majority of the team had served here more than once and a few on all four teams. When asked if they would be willing to come back on a future trip, most of the team members, without hesitation, said yes … and so would we. The lives of both the recipients and providers of care will never be the same. Planning for the next trip has already begun.

Brigitte Lapointe dispensing a perfect pair of eyeglasses.

Ella's Corner

You may have noticed that the older one gets, the faster time flies! Once again we are approaching the celebration of Christmas. To some, it is just a holiday — a time to give and receive gifts and visit relatives.

I hope each of us will pause to think about it as a "holy day": a celebration of the birth of Jesus, God's gift to the world.

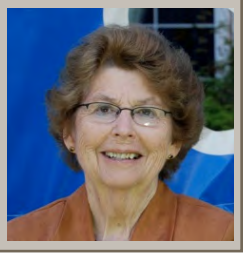
Christmas gifts can be a challenge. And how can we find a gift suitable for One who loved us so much that He was willing to die for us? Jesus has pointed out in Matt. 25:40 how we can handle our gift list! "Whatever you do for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you do for me."

God has gifted each of us in so many ways. We may have the gift of influence and can exercise this power by being an example of generosity when helping those in need. And what about the gift of affluence? When God has placed us in a country of affluence, let's share from our abundant supply.

On behalf of the GRID Board, my husband and I wish you a blessed Christmas as you thoughtfully use your gifts of influence and affluence to continue the work of GRID in Northern Ghana.

May God bless you in 2011,

Ella Porter



Ella Porter serves on GRID's Board.

Jan-jam

Jan-jam is the Mo word for "thank you." We at GRID and NEA have many people to thank.

Thank you to our generous, hard-working team leader, Dr. Jennifer Wilson and her family. We are grateful for your leadership.

Thank you to each medical team member for your dedication and work in both preparing for and implementing the mission.

Thank you to all of you who supported the team with prayer, encouragement, and donations. Your support has been crucial.

Thank you to the family members who said hard good-byes and enabled your loved ones to participate in this mission.

And **thank you** to our God, who has blessed the ongoing work in Ghana and has sent people like you to befriend us.

Jan-jam for partnering with us!

CIDA Funding Approved

We are thrilled to announce that CIDA has approved a $500,000 matching grant to GRID. This funding will be released over two years.

Our plans are to use this grant to expand NEA's development program, and especially our health activities, into new villages. We anticipate that this funding will directly help over 30,000 people in Northern Ghana improve their livelihoods and their health.

We hope that the paperwork for this will be completed and the project will start in early 2011. Your donations to GRID will automatically be directed towards this program, where they will be matched on a 3:1 basis by the Canadian government.

Donating Online

You can **donate to GRID online**. It's easy, secure, and you'll receive your tax receipt within minutes.

To learn more, go to grid-nea.org/donate.

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