Over to the Other Side

by Dr. David and Brenda Mensah

It is truly hard to find the words to say thank you to each one of you for all you have done for the people of Ghana. Thank you to all of the team members who spent months preparing for the two weeks we spent together under the African sun. Thank you to the families who encouraged these team members. Thank you to the donors who made it possible for this team to be present and to bring essential health care to the poorest of the poor.

So, so many lives were saved.

We are reminded of the story of Jesus in Mark 4 and 5. After a day of teaching large crowds, Jesus said to his followers, "**Let's go over to the other side.**" So they climbed into the boat, faced a storm, and got to the other side, where they were met by a man in a pathetic state. Jesus healed him, and then they all got back in the boat to "cross over again," back to the other side.

What is striking is Jesus' effort for this *one* person.

With every one of these missions, there are the huge crowds that benefit so much, but there are also "the ones" who make us feel that the team crossed over to Ghana just for that particular person at that specific moment.

It is our prayer that God will repay you in blessings for your part in bringing this team over to the other side, and that He will open the way for us to continue to bring healing to others in future.

GRID & NEA

sustainable development in Ghana

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**.

For Such A Time as This

by Dr. Jennifer Wilson

As I reflect on this mission, the phrase *for such a time as this* continues to ring in my mind.

Akosua, who leads NEA's Leyaata Project, gave us these words on our first morning in Ghana. As Mordecai challenged Queen Esther in the Bible, Akosua challenged us that we were in Ghana *for such a time as this*. Just as the Jewish people were desperate, needing Queen Esther to intervene, so are the people of Northern Ghana who need us to do the same. She challenged us to go, as Esther did, with joy, courage and passion, doing this as a call from God.

These were powerful words that made us all wonder what we were in store for. It didn't take long for this call to unfold.

A Time to Give Life

It is humbling to realize that some patients would have died had we not arrived in their village at a particular moment in time. The effort and resources it took to bring our team across the ocean were worth it for these precious few alone.

This baby would have died within the hour from cerebral malaria. Saving his life required expertise from our pediatrician, medical doctors, emergency room nurses, pharmacists, anesthetist and local physicians. He returned to his village three days later.

This man's wife would have been a young widow and his children would have been fatherless had he not made it to the Carpenter gates before collapsing from his infected, dying bowel. Our surgical team and anesthetist were stretched outside their comfort zone with no choice but to do an emergency bowel resection followed by post-operative intensive care. After three critical days and countless prayers, this man was eating and drinking and will continue his recovery in a local hospital.

This man arrived at the compound while we were packing to come home. His windpipe was being quickly blocked off by a massive dental abscess. Extensive surgery was undertaken using the combined expertise of our dental team and general surgeons. This was not his time to suffocate from a dental abscess.

This child was blind from congenital cataracts. Identification of this reversible problem will mean life and a future for this child. Dr. Martin, our lead optometrist, is seen here pondering his plan, which ultimately involved arranging cataract surgery in Accra through a pediatric connection we have there. Our extra funds will pay for sight to be restored. We cannot wait to see him again next year, or I should say, we cannot wait for him to see us next year!

These patients represent the thousands who received love, hope and life by the Ghana Health Team in 2013.

A Time to Transfer Skills

What a joy for our team to work side by side with those providing primary care to their people every day: community-based volunteers, pastors, nurses, midwives, medical assistants, pharmacists, optometrists and opticians. Transferring skills and knowledge and providing them with equipment and supplies is one of our four main objectives.

This year the Ministry of Health sent a young Ghanaian physician, who will be posted in the North, to train with us. Dr. Nina was by my side for two weeks except for when she was training in the operating theatre or in our eye clinic. Dr. Nina told our team that she learned more in her two weeks with us that in her entire internship. Despite training at a Northern Medical School in Tamale, she saw diseases that she had never seen before in this region. She was excited to return to her colleagues and to her Medical School at the University of Development Studies to discuss opportunities for future collaborative training with our team.

For such a time as this our team rose to the challenge that Akosua presented on that first morning under the gazebo. *For such a time as this* they delivered hope and life to many. It was a privilege to answer the call to be in Ghana *for such a time as this*.

Please pray that doors will continue to swing open toward the ultimate path of sustainable health for all Ghanaians. Until this ambitious endeavor is reached, please pray that we will continue to find ways to do our part in eliminating avoidable diseases, disabilities and deaths for our global neighbors.

2013 Health Team

Expatriate Members	57
Ghanaian Members	150
Clinics	9
Patients	10,000+
Surgeries	271

A Team Clinic

Each clinic is set up with different stations for patients to move through. It takes teamwork and careful logistics to ensure that every patient receives the necessary medical care.

Team members are greeted by long lineups under tents set up especially for the clinic.

Clinics are preceded by formal greetings with village chiefs.

Nurses assess each visitor. Many are given vitamins, deworming medication or tylenol and sent home; others are directed into the clinic.

Each clinic patient receives an identification band that matches their chart, which is very important since many don't have other identification, like date of birth.

Babies' weight and temperature are taken after registration.

Some patients go directly to the open-air dentistry section, where they "recline" on plastic lawn chairs for their dental work.

This year the team was blessed to have three dentists who could collaborate on difficult cases.

Patients requiring vision help go to the eye station, which is usually set up in a dark (and therefore very hot) building. The team brings used eyeglasses to dispense.

A pediatric doctor examines infants and young children.

Physicians examine patients and arrive at a diagnosis as quickly as possible. Sometimes diagnoses require further testing.

Team physicians are careful to take time to share their knowledge with Ghanaian team members. Here Dr. Tony is explaining a condition to two Ghanaian health professionals.

Nurses test for malaria, HIV, and other illnesses. Test results are used by doctors to diagnose and treat people.

Nurses also provide care for seriously ill patients or those requiring wound dressing.

Volunteers circulate through the clinic, helping out and encouraging. Volunteer Olivia Wilson is bringing team members a mid-afternoon treat.

Once patients have a treatment plan from a doctor, they go to pharmacy to have their prescription filled.

Patients are counseled in how to use their medication.

Meanwhile, at the Carpenter compound, surgeons are performing dozens of surgeries daily.

In God's Perfect Time

by Jacques Lapointe, GRID Chairman

Two things have always impressed me about our work with NEA under David and Brenda Mensah's leadership: an ability to plan and execute with excellence, and an awareness of new opportunities that God opens up. Over years of working together, repeatedly a sense of "what's next" seems to come unannounced and at the right time. Remarkably, the better we plan and implement, the more we are aware of opportunities; likewise the more we examine the opportunities before us, the better we plan. It's all part of being in God's plan and timing.

What does all this have to do with the Health Team? Health has always been one of the most important aspects of our work, whether by providing clean water, food security, or access to the most basic of health interventions. Almost seven years ago, at just the right time, Dr. Jennifer Wilson led the first of our now-regular medical missions to Ghana. These teams opened up a whole new aspect of our work in the area of health.

I now observe in awe as God is putting new opportunities before us in the area of health. Each year more Ghanaian health professionals have come to work with the Health Team, allowing for skill transfer. Some of our scholarship recipients are studying medicine at university. We have made contacts with Canadian charities involved in developing world health facilities initiatives. These are just some of the opportunities that are opening up.

Our thoughts are turning to what can be done to improve the year-round sustainability of health care in Northern Ghana. Questions such as, "Why not more advanced eye care?" are being asked. The roadblocks that prevented any serious consideration of these matters in the past are slowly being removed. I have absolutely no doubt that in God's perfect time, the right people, facilities, equipment, communications capabilities, and funding will come together to fulfill this next step in His perfect plan.

Our prayer is for clarity of vision, wisdom, and a sense of His timing as we explore these opportunities that are before us, while at the same time assuring that the Health Team continues to meet the tremendous need that it is fulfilling.

Jacques and Brigitte Lapointe both participated in the 2013 Ghana Health Team, arriving in Ghana early to help with preparations.

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