

Tomek Cymes (Clinical Medicine) – Zambia, Summer 2014

For my elective I went to Monze Mission Hospital in Zambia. I spent 5 weeks cycling through the major wards (medical, surgical, paediatric, obs&gynae and outpatient/GP/A&E), with the last 2 weeks set aside to spend on the most interesting one (which turned out to be surgical). My days usually started with a ward round or surgical list, which lasted until early afternoon. I spent the rest of the day doing various ward jobs and taking histories/examining patients.

During the 7 weeks I managed to see various conditions relatively rare in the Western world (eg. Kaposi's sarcoma or uncorrected talipes equinovarus in teenagers). While in theatres, I was able to get more involved than in the UK, assisting in various surgical procedures as the first assistant or performing spinal anaesthesia under supervision. As part of the elective, my brother (who went to the same place) and I designed a new observations chart for the hospital.

The main challenge in Zambia was the language barrier. Fortunately, medical staff (including nurses) was able to speak English and translate from the local language when necessary. This, however, taught me how important good communication between patients and doctors is in practising medicine.

During the stay I met various interesting people, including other elective students, doctors from Europe working in the hospital or an American lady teaching deaf children.

For the 2 weeks after my elective, I travelled around Zambia (going to see Victoria Falls and Livingstone) and neighbouring Tanzania (going for a 4 day safari).



Paediatric ward round (together with Irish student and two local students)