

The Kudjip Experience

KNH is a general hospital, serving as the District Hospital for a large area of the Whagi and Jimi valleys of central Papua New Guinea. We have about 110 inpatient beds, and in 2003 we saw 38,195 outpatient visits and 4,173 inpatient admissions. In addition we delivered about 849 babies (that's about 70 per month, of which 13-14 are c-sections) and did 1570 surgical procedures. We saw about 800 people accept Christ.

We have a 26-bed adult medicine ward, a 26-bed surgical ward, a 27-bed pediatric ward, a 12-bed tuberculosis ward, and a 19-bed maternity ward. We have a labor suite with 3 delivery beds. We have a nursery the capacity of which is quite flexible, up to about 10 babies. We have two operating theaters and a minor procedure room. Our Outpatient Department includes 6 exam rooms and a 5-bed Emergency Room. We have both fixed and portable x-ray machines, and can do most basic views. We have two ultrasound machines, which are used by all of our physicians. Our laboratory facilities include both hematology and chemistry, as well as microscopy and blood banking. Unfortunately, we have no microbiology lab, but we are able to do serological tests for syphilis, hepatitis B and HIV.

Our medical staff presently includes three family physicians, a pediatrician and a general surgeon. All are residency-trained and board-certified. In addition, we frequently have visiting physicians in a variety of specialties.

Volunteers who come here usually have a wide variety of experience. They generally are assigned a portion of one of our inpatient wards. They see those patients on morning rounds, and then spend the remainder of their day in the Outpatient department. Volunteers in the primary care specialties see outpatients along with our staff doctors. Those in more limited specialties usually see referral cases. Since practicing here can be very different than practicing in more developed countries, we try to make sure that our staff doctors are available to answer questions as needed. Surgeons usually spend 2 or 3 days a week in the OR. Many surgical specialists enjoy the chance to scrub with our general surgeon on cases outside their usual experience.

Primary care doctors commonly do more procedures than they would in their home country. They often do several thoracenteses and pericenteses, repair complex lacerations, do many I&Ds and lumbar punctures. They may do ultrasounds, D&Cs, manual extraction of retained placentas, and closed reductions of various fractures. Depending on their experience, they may assist in the operating theater, and may perform cesarean sections.

Most of our volunteers take call. The primary care doctors take general call in rotation with our staff doctors. If their skills do not include obstetrics, a staff

doctor is assigned back-up duties for OB. Specialists usually make themselves available after hours for emergencies in their specialty.

Volunteers also have opportunities to teach. Our staff doctors are always striving to broaden their skills, and usually take advantage of the knowledge of any volunteers that come. In addition, we often have students or residents here, and volunteers that are here at the same time often get involved in teaching.

Outside the hospital, volunteers have opportunities to gain an understanding of the people of the Whagi Valley. They often visit nearby villages, visit with local people and attend cultural events. Most worship in "bush" churches on some of the Sundays that they are here. There are many interesting hikes in the vicinity of KNH that afford opportunities to see both people and beautiful scenery. Visitors usually go into the nearby town of Mount Hagen once or twice during their stay. (Most find that once is more than enough!)

In addition, volunteers usually get to know the staff of KNH well. They are usually invited into the homes of the medical and non-medical missionaries, and are included in activities on the station. Those with a personal interest in medical missions have opportunities to ask questions of missionaries at various stages of their careers, and to discuss their own plans and aspirations with experienced missionaries. They also are able to observe how missionaries and their families live, and to gain an understanding of the challenges and the rewards of missionary life.