



## KRB Update #2182 – Befriend-A-Patient

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Greetings from the nation of Guinea, West Africa. In this issue of KRB Update, I am excited to share with you more about the Befriend-a-Patient project. Befriend-a-Patient visits provide interested crewmembers a practical and unique opportunity to demonstrate Mercy Ships' second core value: *to love and serve others*. A genuine friendship from the heart communicates volumes. Friendships between crew and patients enrich the on board experience of crew and patient alike. We believe that transformation happens one person at a time. As us crew members are being transformed by the love of God we are able to share this love with patients through time spent together. Activities will depend on the patient though may include crafts, watching a DVD together in the ward, coloring, drawing, bible study, games, cards, going outside on deck 7 and taking a walk.



I have been involved with visiting the patients from the beginning of my time on the *Anastasis* in 2006 and over the last six years have befriended many patients. Most of my local friends in a country are former patients, day workers and partners.



Currently, I am assigned to a seven year old boy named Ibrahim, he is actually from Sierra Leone. This is his third visit to the hospital ship due to his leg bone problems. He has recently had orthopaedic surgery on both legs and so can't really move much while in his bed except for his upper body. At a recent Sunday service in the ward, he was clapping and moving his shoulders as we had praise and worship together. Since he has been to school, he does speak some English which helps in our communications. I will post photos of

Ibrahim as they are available – though for this update I have included three patients from Togo – Dodji, Florent and Cyril. Though in African culture, I never just visit one patient, but those in the beds next to him as the wards are like a small community especially with the children. All children under 15 years old need a caregiver to be with them. My visits to the wards are great highlights.

To answer a follow up question related to screening that a friend asked and others may be wondering about - "*Does it get easier having to turn people away that need services?*" No it does not get easier, but when I turn away people explaining in a caring way that we don't have doctors/surgeons that can help them. I know I am being honest with them and they respect and appreciate that. Though the ones that break my heart are children and especially when someone comes too late and the surgeries are already finished but if they came earlier there may have been a chance as it is one of our specialties - those are awful hard and you feel like crying with them as the parents are usually at that stage. Even though it is hard on me, I can't imagine the parent's heart as for many there is no other option. I had this with an orthopaedic kid with bilateral club feet and I still grieve that we can't help him. I think many times if it was my child, I would ask and ask again in hopes to get help. Thank you all for your prayers, encouragement and support as I serve. Serving Together, **Keith**

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