



KRB Update #2185 – Noma

Keith R. Brinkman

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Greetings from the nation of Guinea, West Africa. Noma – as you read the header subject line, you think what is Noma and why is Keith writing about it. Noma is a disease of poverty – here is the link to Wikipedia with more details:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noma_\(disease\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noma_(disease)). Noma (cancrum oris) is an acute and ravaging gangrenous infection affecting the face. The victims of Noma are

mainly children under the age of 6, caught in a vicious circle of extreme poverty and chronic malnutrition. We see them come to our screenings with the effects of Noma.

Noma begins with ulcers in the mouth. If the condition is detected in the early stage, progression can be prevented with the use of mild antibiotics and immediate nutritional rehabilitation. If left untreated, as happens in most cases, the ulcers progress to Noma at an alarming pace. The next stage is extremely painful when the cheeks or lips begin to swell and the victim's general condition deteriorates. Within a few days, the swelling increases and a blackish furrow (trench) appears and the gangrenous process sets in and, after the scab falls away and a gaping hole is left in the face. It is estimated that the mortality rate reaches up to an alarming 90%. So the ones we are seeing are those who have survived this horrible disease. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 140,000 new cases of Noma occur each year and of these, a mere 10% survive. That means that 126,000 die each year, mainly in sub-Saharan countries from Senegal to Ethiopia, a region known as "the Noma belt". Reconstructive facial surgery needs to be carried out in a well-equipped and well-staffed hospital. The facial reconstruction of a Noma victim is both complex and time consuming and requires very special skills. As we have specialized surgical units in our hospital on board, we are able to assist with surgeries for these survivors. Most of this paragraph came from the web site: www.facingafrica.org, though I am not familiar with

them, but they had the best written description on Noma.

I learned more about this disease from meeting patients in our hospital and more recently during a Hospital In-Service training

class on a Wednesday evening – conducted by our Chief Medical

Officer Maxillofacial Surgeon, Dr. Gary.

I currently visit two patients – one a child named 'Koto' and one young adult, 'Alpha Oumar', both from different areas of the nation of Guinea. Last month, they had their first of multiple surgeries which they will need. Please pray * for our patients, particularly for those suffering with the effects of Noma. * for our healthcare professionals as they care for them. * transformation of lives
Serving Together, **Keith**

Email: keith.brinkman@yahoo.com www.KeithBrinkman.com

Mail: Keith R. Brinkman, Mercy Ships, P.O. Box 2020, Lindale, TX 75771



Koto and his uncle – while at the HOPE Center – prior to his 1st surgery



Alpha Oumar up on deck 7 of the ship



Alpha Oumar at the HOPE Center prior to his 1st surgery.