



KRB Update #2209 – Madagascar 2

Keith R. Brinkman with Mercy Ships

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‘Salama’ from the *Africa Mercy* back in Madagascar. After a couple delays in South Africa, we set sail and returned to this the fourth largest island in the world and our home for the next ten months. I am excited for this field service and all that God has in store for our patients, this crew, our partners and for me.

The last time we conducted two back-to-back field services was in Monrovia, Liberia in 2007 and 2008 – I served on the Advance Team for the time in between. This time, I was the Liaison for the Advance Team on board the ship. There are some unique opportunities available to us:



- ✚ Extensive screening for surgical patients in the capital for 3 weeks before the ship returned and in ten cities strategically located around the country. In the southern city of Taolagnaro, the pre-screening conducted by a partner and our two days last week – 58 potential patients received appointment cards to come to the ship for their final screening by the operating surgeon. One comment from a potential patient was “*so grateful for the fact that Mercy Ships travelled so far down to select patients from my area.*”
- ✚ As we learned of the great need for women’s health surgeries during our first visit, we have adjusted our surgical schedule and will offer more obstetric fistula, uterine prolapse and other gynecological surgeries for primarily the rural Malagasy women. For all of our surgical specialties, we are planning on over 2,000 surgeries.
- ✚ Due to the largest number of patients coming from outside the port city area, we expanded our HOPE Center to have 244 beds for patients and caregivers for their stay before surgery and afterwards when they only need outpatient care and not 24/7 nursing care. Plus we have completed two additional infrastructure development projects in June and July at the local government/university hospital and will start the renovations of the operating room block later this month. Helping to improve healthcare delivery in this nation and this region.
- ✚ Medical Capacity Building – having learned more of the types of medical training they need during our first visit, we have been able to formulate our most complete surgery-focused training courses (with training of trainers component) and mentoring opportunities on board. These projects have been specifically developed to impart knowledge and skills, while modeling and encouraging compassion and a professional work ethic. We expect over 500 healthcare professional participants.

In all areas, remembering our vision statement of “*Mercy Ships uses hospital ships to transform individuals and serve nations, one at a time.*”

For me, I look forward with great expectation to reconnecting with my friends in this nation – day crew (local workers), patients, caregivers and partners. I am going to be more involved with Befriend-a-Patient for that one-on-one connection with our patients, who are in our hospital just below my cabin and down the hall from my office. I have one patient who will be returning for a second surgery – Stani Junior - and so I can’t wait to see him again.

Thank you all your support – through your prayers, encouragement, and financial support – together we are following the example of Jesus bringing hope and healing to the world’s forgotten poor.



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