



KRB Update #2218 – Interview

Keith R. Brinkman with Mercy Ships

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Indiana – I think most of you know that is where I grew up and where most of my family lives, my home church, some supporters, and many friends. Though, I haven't lived there since 1989. A dear friend who serves in the Marketing department of our US office asked if I would willing to do a television interview over Skype with WTHR 13 – the NBC affiliate in Indianapolis. I agreed and the reporter sent some possible questions and I thought I would share them with you all. We went over these and others for the television spot, though they take much footage and reduce as needed. Here is link to their site: <http://www.wthr.com/article/pursuing-her-purpose-center-grove-woman-to-help-others-from-a-mercy-ship> to watch the short video online. Please note that Jennifer who is featured is arriving tonight and small world – her son graduated with my oldest nephew, Dustin.

Why are you doing this? After hearing Don Stephens, our founder and president share in 1985 about Mercy Ships, I knew in my heart that I would be involved in this organization – I never knew it would be over 28 years of my life. By bringing my skills and abilities along with everyone else's from our crew from + 40 different nations we are making a difference in individual lives, healthcare systems and nations. Growing up on the West Side of Indy – I never dreamed of living on a hospital ship in Africa.

How do you know you are making an impact? On the ship, we serve as a team – about 400 people serving as volunteers - half serving in healthcare positions and other half in vital roles on board – engineering, deck, galley, dining room, and the academy. We are making an impact as we hear our patients share how their life is changed, our medical training participants share that what they have learned will help them take better care of their patients and will share with others – hearing from the president or prime minister what they are seeing during our 10 month visit and afterwards.

What are your responsibilities and the challenges you face? Responsible for programs oversight which includes planning, finances, reports, statistics, etc. My first class in Accounting at Ben Davis High School and at IUPUI helped to prepare me for this career. Previously I served as the Finance Director on an earlier ship. *Challenge* – finding the right people with the right skills at the right time to serve with us.

What should we know about the global health crisis you see on a daily basis? Lancet Commission on Global Surgery Globally an estimated 5 billion people do not have access to safe, affordable surgical and anesthesia care when needed. In low income countries – that can be 90% of the population. We are responding by both providing surgeries (here in Benin >2,000) and at the same time training healthcare professionals from the host nation – surgeons, anesthesia providers, nurses, biomedical, sterile technicians, etc.

What challenges do you face? Working with our potential patients and having to say no we are not able to provide them with surgery – especially if it is a child and something that normally we could do but they come too late. Language at times, but we have over 200 locals who we hire and many serve as translators.

What's been your "high" moment? Time with our patients prior to and during their recovery process in our hospital – I can walk 30 seconds from my office or cabin to our hospital – time hearing their story, playing Jenga/memory game - building relationship – primarily with pediatric orthopedic and plastics reconstructive surgical patients are often with us for months to receive their healing. Sometimes visiting them in their homes – including a village in Sierra Leone to see a cleft lip boy Kalimu - the chief shared that I was the first 'white' man in their village and they were so thankful to Mercy Ships for the change in Kalimu.

This update in memory of Berthelin: 17 years old, who died in Madagascar on Friday - he was one of my patients who visited regularly and talked with him after he returned home. We provided surgery for a better quality of life in his final months/years as he had cancer and there was no treatment available. I learned of his death this morning before our ward service from our hospital chaplain - she read the scripture of "comfort for those who mourn" - I think of his mom, brother, family and friends. After crying, I felt in my heart and mind, 'he is with Me' referring to God.

Thank you all for being a part of my life and ministry here.

Serving Together, **Keith**

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