

# KRB NEWS

## Missionary: Keith R Brinkman

March 2007

### Surgery in AFRICA

We witness life changing surgeries happening daily here on the Anastasis – affecting the lives of the patient, their family and their community. In the area of surgery on the Caribbean Mercy, we were providing eye surgeries, but here on this ship, there are so many more surgical interventions taking place just one deck below my cabin #142.

Here is a short overview of the surgeries that took place in Ghana:

- **Ophthalmic Surgery:** To reduce the prevalence of blindness due to cataract, pterygium (growth on the outside of the eye), and strabismus (crossed eyes) and build capacity of the local eye care system. 1,324 patients had their sight restored via eye surgery – the blind see. 32 eye professionals have received additional training.
- **Reconstructive Surgery:** 441 patients received 590 specialized, surgical procedures for those with maxillofacial or plastic reconstructive conditions.
- **Vaginal Vesico Fistula (VVF) Surgery:** 62 women received specialized surgical treatments, training and awareness.

Ever since '85 when I first heard about Mercy Ships, I always wanted to watch an eye surgery and a maxillofacial surgery. I was able to see one of the first eye surgeries we did on the Caribbean Mercy. Though it was late last year, that I was able to watch a couple maxillofacial surgeries. I watched everything that day with great interest to see what they are able to do. The surgeons explained the procedures and that was truly helpful. For the blood needs of the patients, we basically have a 'walking blood bank' on board. We as

the crew volunteer to be tested and typed and ready to donate. The patients' care continues in our 42 bed ward as they recover from their surgeries, some only for a few days, others a couple months with us on board. Jonas, one of the patients I assisted during our mass general screening in June, came for his maxillofacial surgery (I am watching his surgery in this picture). We were able to visit and pray as he had many weeks of recovery.

With another of the young guys, Robert (who had several skin grafts and plastic surgeries), we played the Uno card game together.



Daniel & I with Robert on his departure date

On the ward, I joined Robert & Jonas at the Sunday worship services which were scheduled and the patients were welcome to participate along with the general crew – you should hear some of the powerful testimonies that the patients share.

One more surgery story, I was invited by Dr. Neil to witness as he performed a ten minute surgery on a 100 year old blind

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woman named Mercy – blind in one eye by shingles and in the other by a cataract. The doctor was able to remove the cataract and she has sight once again.

### Programs

I serve in the Programs department, which includes Health Care Services, Community Development Services, Church Empowerment and Advance Team. I am serving our Programs Director with administrative, logistical and financial assistance as the Programs Administrator. I have great variety in what I am doing and I am enjoying that. At the same time we are conducting a field service in a country, we are also preparing for the next two years in order to make all the arrangements and contacts needed.

### Africa Mercy

The *Africa Mercy* is scheduled to arrive in Monrovia, Liberia in May. We have started the Liberia field service with the *Anastasis* and then after the *Africa Mercy's* arrival, we will have a transitional period as we move people, equipment and supplies from one ship to the other. The capacity of the *Africa Mercy* will double what we have been able to do on the *Anastasis* and the *Caribbean Mercy* combined. One of the new services to be offered on the ship will be orthopaedic. Surgeries have started here on board in Liberia and I will be sharing with you more stories and patients experiences.

*Serving Together,*

**Keith R. Brinkman, Mercy Ships**

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Robert playing on aft deck (same place our children play – like our backyard)



## OUR VALUES

Desiring to follow the example of Jesus, we seek to: 1. Love God, 2. Love and serve others. 3. Be people of integrity. 4. Be people of excellence in all we say and do.