

Medical student elective to Holley Memorial hospital - Tim Shaw and Andrew Gerard

This summer we were privileged to spend 6 weeks on a medical elective in Holley Memorial Hospital (HMH), Nigeria. The hospital site spans several acres in rural country, hundreds of miles away from city life. Many people travel long distances to receive basic and advanced healthcare. Therefore the hospital has grown to provide an amazing range of medical services (General medicine, GP, maternity, HIV/AIDS care, eye care, leprosy and more). The wards have about 50 beds and there may be more than a hundred outpatients every day. The staff is small but hard-working, with about 5 doctors and 10 nurses as well as administrators, pharmacists, occupational therapists and healthcare assistants.

We were four excited medical students in total, good friends from University and united by our faith in Jesus Christ. Our daily routine began with ward rounds at 8.30am on weekday mornings. We mostly observed the doctor and answered questions, sometimes presenting patients we had talked to or examined the day before. The "Big Five" medical problems which we encountered daily were malaria, TB, HIV/AIDS, diabetes and leg ulcers. The four of us would divide up mid-morning for different activities: reviewing patients at the HIV clinic, visiting long-term leprosy patients, shadowing the doctor on outpatients or helping out at maternity. Afternoons were usually free for us to rest, study, see patients or watch surgery. The hospital was a focal point for the local community, having a school and a chapel on site. We took part in church services on Sundays and spent one week of afternoons running a kids' club. One weekend we joined up with the Mission Africa sports team to reach out to a nearby community through football. The variety of experiences made for great taste of missionary medicine.

We were impressed by HMH's approach to providing healthcare as they combine it with a loving witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This gave two clear challenges to us as medical students entering our final year at University. First, when God gives us the opportunity to work as doctors, will we do it as part of our worship to Him? Secondly, will we be a consistent and growing witness to the gospel of Christ in our work?

We were touched by the huge welcome from the HMH community and made some great friends during our time there. We were also excited to watch the foundations being laid for a government-approved School of Nursing on the hospital site. This will improve staff training and standards of healthcare, as well as allowing more people to hear of the hope of HMH. Our prayer is that God would build up the believers at HMH, give them wisdom to direct their work and use their testimony to bring many more people into His family through faith in Jesus Christ.