

Hospital help trip to Ghana

- Peter Easthope - Island Tides Newspaper - <http://www.islandtides.com/>

On May 25, a seven-person team left Vancouver on a one month medical mission—destination: Ghana, western Africa. After 15 hours airborne with a 6-hour stop in Amsterdam, they landed at Kotoki Airport, Accra at 6:30pm, after equatorial sunset. By 8pm, customs and immigration were cleared and luggage, including 14 large cases, had been collected. Met by Samuel Ampem-Asare, Dr Adekwei and Dr Afua Hesse the team was driven to the Hesse's guest house. Supper and sleep were welcome to the southwestern-BC team, which was comprised of president of Compassionate Resource Warehouse (CRW) Dell Wergeland; president of Korle-Bu Neuroscience Foundation (KGNF) Marj Ratel, RN; Denise Stone, RN; Jocelyne Lapointe, MD; Karen Currie, RN; Danny Moe; and Pender Islands' Peter Easthope. The next day the team toured the recently opened private medical school, the Accra College of Medicine, built by the Hesses. It has 14 students in their first year. In the afternoon, they visited the Tetteh Quarshie Memorial Hospital, situated in Mampong, northeast of Accra. Quarshie was a Ghanaian who introduced cocoa cultivation to Ghana in 1873. The hospital has 78 adult beds, 36 paediatric beds and 400 staff. In early May of 2016 the hospital had received a 40-foot shipping container from CRW and KBNF, to assist in establishing the first palliative care and pain management unit in Ghana. The following morning, the KBNF directors prepared for visits to Sierra Leone and Liberia. Most of the Saturday afternoon was spent at the Accra National Cultural Center perusing craft products and haggling with vendors. On Sunday, tickets were bought for the 10am bus to Techiman, northwest of Accra. The bus was Korean-built, air conditioned and comfortable except for the absence of a toilet. After about 6 hours on the road the driver conceded to a peebreak at a truck stop. The facility was a concrete-lined gutter with a concrete wall for privacy. About 6pm, the bus pulled into the central market in Techiman. Soon the team settled into spacious apartments on the top floor of Mount Olives Hospital, a few kilometres west of the city-centre. The hospital was built and is owned by Dr Gladstone Kessie. Staff includes four licensed nurses, twenty-one health care assistants, two resident physicians, a pharmacist, seven pharmacy assistants, six security officers, eight claims clerks, an accountant and four receptionists. The hospital has 22 paediatric beds and 48 adult beds. There are two operating rooms, a delivery room and physiotherapy rooms. Some expenses are paid by the government; others by the patients. On Monday morning our bags of gear were unpacked, we met various staff members and became oriented. The nurses began their work of surveying procedures, mentoring and teaching. I was assigned a room to use as workshop. In early 2015, a shipping container with items ranging from sewing notions to a neurosurgical microscope had been unpacked into vacant apartments adjacent to our quarters. Much of my work was to find clinical equipment and attempt to put it to use; parts had to be found and assembled. Typically, the Ghanaian electrical system is similar to the British system. Power is supplied at 220V and a transformer is needed for the majority of North American equipment. Oxygen supply can also present incompatibilities between the European and North American connections. Although Mount Olives performs urgent surgeries and emergencies 24/7, most scheduled surgeries are on a Friday. On June 3 a caesarean section was scheduled. The OR nurse approached Karen Currie at a nursing station. OR Nurse: Ms Karen we are doing a c-section. Want to come? KC: Sure! (thinking she will observe). They dash to the operating room. Karen

scrubs and gowns. OR Nurse: Come around here. (Karen is assisting!) The surgeon cuts the dermis and Karen installs the first retractor. More cuts and retractions. Finally, the surgeon breaks the amniotic sack. Karen presses downward and out comes the baby. Karen holds him on Mom's belly while the surgeon delivers the placenta. Karen passes baby to the OR nurse and helps the surgeon with suturing. Another busy morning at Mount Olives!