

# MSUK NEWS



Charlene, Alex & Amanda from the UK P&I Club, Sunny from the London Independent and Sarah from Stena Line headed off to Guinea Oct 15th to spend a few days onboard our hospital ship.

We arrived in Guinea safe and sound, very excited and armed with three enormous cases full of treats and goodies for our UK volunteers. All was going swimmingly until one of those cases was seized by airport officials in Guinea and our passports were taken away by the police. After a few LONG scary moments, Lara, our trip host, appeared passports in hand. We all breathed a sigh of relief and were elated when our "dodgy" case was also released. We could now continue on our seemingly dangerous "delivery of chocolate advent calendars" mission. Hurrah!

Our agenda for the three days was really well thought out and jam packed: it included visits to the Hope Centre, the Dental Surgery, play time on deck 7 with some recovering children, a meet and greet with UK volunteers, meeting the captain, an engine room tour, a ward tour, a visit to the Eye Clinic, and a ship tour. We even squeezed in a trip to the local markets and a meal out! I loved every single second and would happily continue to elaborate on every aspect, but, for the sake of space, I will focus further detail on our visits to the Hope Centre, the Dental Clinic and our ward tour.

## HOPE CENTRE

The Hope Centre (Hospital Outpatient Extension Centre) is a renovated building on land which provides a clean, safe place for some of our patients to rest and recuperate after their operations and while awaiting follow up treatments (physiotherapy, a change of dressings, the removal of stitches etc). The Hope Centre is managed by Martha, a remarkable volunteer from the USA who has been volunteering for Mercy Ships since 2014. When our hospital ship leaves Guinea, the Hope Centre will stay behind as a facility for the community. Twice a week visitors and crew from the ship visit the Hope Centre to play games, sing songs and dance with the patients. There was a real feeling of joy and happiness and Martha and her team were the epitome of Hope.



## DENTAL CLINIC

On our visit to the dental clinic we met the fantastic David Ugai (the senior dentist). He's served with Mercy Ships in Guinea and other locations before. He very kindly took the time to show us around and share some stories. It was really upsetting and incredibly shocking to hear stories of people actually dying due to an abscess, and how many people go on to develop enormous facial tumours owing to an abscess. David radiated warmth and compassion. He's been instrumental in developing our dental programme in Guinea. We have developed a new way of working in country, and for the first time we have teamed up with a local university. The university provided a number of rooms, which Mercy Ships renovated. They are now sterile, fully functioning treatment and training suites. Our dental team can now treat dental patients, train dental students and we will be leaving a state of the art, fully functioning dental clinic behind, so a real legacy.

## HOSPITAL TOUR

We meet many wonderful people in life and Dr Gary Parker is up there as one of the best. He has volunteered with Mercy Ships for over 25 years, helping transform the lives of thousands of patients. He has also trained many surgeons from around the world. As part of the tour we visited some of the patients on the ward and it was incredible and very humbling. One patient had an enormous tumour on his shoulder and around the top of his arm. Dr Gary explained that the patient had chosen not to go ahead with surgery because it would almost definitely result in him being paralysed in that arm; meaning he would be unable to work as a farmer and would be unable to feed his children. The tumour would simply have to grow and grow - I found this utterly heart-breaking and it really made me reflect on how lucky we are and how unjust the world can be.



" When people come to the Mercy Ship, and they see the impossible happen, hope for the future is born! "

Dr Gary Parker

The whole trip was just incredible and extremely humbling. It was great to share the experience with such a lovely group of people. Having Amanda and Alex in the group was fantastic, they are so enthusiastic and so knowledgeable. I learned lots about ships and we all learned something about insurance!

Thank you, UK P&I Club for being such a brilliant supporter.



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