

# Rwamagana – the first Hernia Training Centre in Ruanda

Report of a humanitarian Mission, 5<sup>th</sup> February till 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016

*Ralph Lorenz*



The growing capital of Rwanda's Eastern Province is located only 50 kilometers away from Kigali and can be reached easily on well paved roads: Rwamagana.

But not only the number of well paved roads increased since the last mission of "Surgeons for Africa", also the face of Kigali has been changing rapidly over the last years - Rwanda seems to develop in an unimaginable speed since 2014.

In the run up of this humanitarian mission the **Rotary Club Zitadelle Spandau from Berlin** organized a huge fundraising: due to this financial support we asked the involved local hospitals by mail for urgent needs of medical equipment. A huge number of medical devices were acquired:

- 1 OP Table
- 6 mobile OP-Lamps
- 3 diathermy machines
- 4 Monitors
- 8 capnometers

- 120 Sets of reusable surgical drapes

All these materials needed to be well packed due to air cargo conditions and administrative barriers. The relief was almost tangible when finally the whole air cargo arrived safely on 29<sup>th</sup> February in Kigali via Amsterdam.

The majority of the German Team with 19 volunteers and 32 boxes of additional surgical and anaesthetic devices started its journey to Rwanda on 6th February – meeting the members of the British Team in the same plane. All together more than 1, 5 tons of medical material was transported to remain in Rwanda this year.



An overwhelming thanks in this respect needs to be given to **Brussels Airlines** which once again supported the booking and realization of the transport generously and uncomplicated. In preparation of this mission Pastor Osee Nvatuka of the relief organization **Rwanda Legacy of Hope** planned together with Dr. Chris Opong from the organization **OperationHernia** our mission and welcomed the whole team at Kigali airport. We are deeply thankful to both supporters and their staff. We also like to give our warmhearted thanks to the ambassador of Rwanda in Germany, **His Excellence Mr. Igor Cesar**, for his constructive support of our project!

After the first two successful humanitarian missions in February 2013 with two teams (Nyamata Hospital and Remera Rukoma Hospital) and in February 2014 with overall four Teams (Nyamata Hospital, Remera Rukoma Hospital, Kirinda Hospital und Gahini Hospital)

this year 27 British and German Team members planned their mission in six hospitals in Rwanda.

In this year the team focused on a sustainable advanced training of the local surgeons: the **first Rwandan central workshop for Hernia-repair** was given due to governmental decision in Rwamagana Provincial Hospital. This first hernia-workshop took place in a newly built training-center that was established just for this occasion: 14 Rwandan surgeons from nine District and Provincial hospitals participated. According to statistics merely 50 surgeons practice in Rwanda (population of 12 million people): in conclusion almost a quarter of the total number of surgeons was trained during this workshop. The University of Kigali and the Rwandan Ministry of Health supported this training and certified this training course with 35 CPD Credits.

In the long term a **Training Center for Hernia Surgery** is planned at the **Provincial Hospital in Rwamagana** which stresses and encourages the sustainability of this project.

The Basics of Hernia Surgery were taught in the first two days with lectures on Epidemiology of hernia diseases in Rwanda, the Anatomy of hernias and Basic principles of hernia-repair-techniques. Dr. George Ntakiyiruta (University of Kigali), Dr. Chris Oppong (Consultant Surgeon from Plymouth in the U.K.) and Dr. Ralph Lorenz (Consultant Surgeon from Berlin) gave different state of the art lectures. In addition to this theoretical impact several practical training completed this workshop for the 14 Trainees in six different Rwandan hospitals.

After the stay in Kigali the teams separated on Sunday and drove with the imported equipment (which was split at the Ministry of Health) in the relevant hospitals.

The British Mission leader and surgeon Dr. Chris Oppong led the team at Gahini Hospital, the German surgeons Dr. Stefan Knaut, Dr. Jens Heidel und the anaesthetist Dr. Evelyn Koblitz were responsible for the team in Kirinda Hospital. The German surgeons Dr. Karl Spitzer, Dr. Christine Kosch und the anaesthetist Dr. Petra Wölkerling led a team in the Nyamata Hospital, the British surgeon Dr. David Sedgwick a team at Remera Rukoma Hospital and the German surgeons Dr. Oliver Stumpf, Dr. Atingwa Tasi and the anaesthetist Dr. Maral Miller a team in Kigeme Hospital. The Rwamagana Hospital Team consisted of the of the German mission leader, Dr. Ralph Lorenz, (Berlin based surgeon), anesthetist Dr. Carmen Jäger, Dr. Albrecht Frunder (surgeon), Heike Herget as anesthetic nurse and Sandra Chambilla-Diaz as theatre nurse. Both experienced and new team members were focused to offer together as much medical knowledge as possible.

The Rwandan Media response to our mission was enormous: Television as well as Newspapers reported during the training on several occasions.



The statistic results in Rwamagana Hospital showed an outcome of 39 Operations on 31 patients in five days. Operation Techniques were based on SHOULDICE (without mesh) and LICHTENSTEIN (with mesh). Most of the patients were operated in spinal anaesthesia.

Because most patients needed to travel quite long ways most of them stayed overnight in the hospital one or two days. All operations were finished without complications and every patient was discharged from hospital during our stay. Every trainee had a chance to operate during this workshop more than five hernias by themselves under our supervision so that practical knowledge and theoretical impact were well balanced.

After this labour intensive one and a half week the whole German Team was able to enjoy a short roundtrip through Rwanda firstly in Gisenyi at Lake Kivu and afterwards either Volcanoes- or the Akagera-National Park.

Without the generous support of a numerous private and commercial donations this Mission would not have been possible – not to mention the outstanding and selfless engagement of the whole staff.

The great success of this Mission was also the result of their capacity for teamwork of each of the participants.

Once again we experienced a huge variety of positive impressions during this humanitarian work in Ruanda. Sustainable surgery in Rwanda was developed one step further.

One of the most touching experiences in Rwanda was the overwhelming thankfulness and appreciation of all the patients, doctors, nurses and hospital-workers we were allowed to work with.

Within two weeks a very personal and cooperative partnership developed.

We are looking forward to come back to Rwanda!