The second partners meeting for the Safer Obstetrics in Rural Tanzania (SORT) project was held February 27 and 28 in Bagamoyo, Tanzania. The meeting included Tanzanian partners from Assistant Medical Officer, Clinical Officer, Nursing and Medical Teaching centers from Arusha, Kibaha, Mbeya, Machame, Moshi, Mwanza, Sengerema and Tanga. Also included were Canadian representatives from the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC).

The meeting was initiated with Dr. Ronald Lett presenting a detailed review of the progress of the SORT project during the first 2 years. Prior to the meeting, each of the participants were assigned to complete a detailed evaluation and critique of all the case studies, quiz questions and technical exercises for one of the CNIS courses –either FIRST, ESS or SOO. The composite assessments worked very well and the end result was that CNIS had expert opinion with which to improve the courses it teaches in the SORT project. There were also presentations on the ALARM and ALSO courses, as well as a review of other Emergency Obstetrical courses to understand the advantages of the alternatives for future projects. Lorne Braun, the CNIS program associate was the rapporteur for this meeting and kept detailed records so that the CNIS curriculum will benefit from these critiques.

Bagamoyo is a historic city -the name of which means 'lay down your heart' as this was a mainland port which sent slaves to Zanzibar to be sold. It has been connected to the Persian Gulf, the Sultanate of Zanzibar, the German and British Empire. On the Saturday morning after the meeting, the partners toured Bagamoyo, visiting the historic sites which included the ruins of a 12 century Persian Mosque, the church where David Livingstone’s body rested on his way to Westminster Abbey and the fish market which has remained unchanged for centuries. After 2 days of academic rigor it was refreshing to have the morning off to enjoy the sites and each other’s our Tanzanian partners dispersed to their home communities.

Plan to attend the 14th Annual – Bethune Round Table; June 5 – 8, 2014 McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario on “Improving Global Health Outcomes through Safer Surgery.” Post conference, CNIS is offering a “Team Trauma Training” Instructor’s Course For more information please visit http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/surgery/isd/brt2014.html

SHARING SKILLS. SAVING LIVES.
Cross Cultural Volunteering

Professional volunteers for CNIS get to see much more of Africa than most tourists. In addition to teaching cross culturally they must adapt to the local situation. Teaching students and working with colleagues is one of the great pleasures associated with being a CNIS volunteer. Additionally, their experience will likely give much more insight to the reality of Africa and Africans than the Safari that they sometimes take after their teaching assignment. Being in the real Africa does not give you the insulation of tour guides and five-star hotels. It requires special people to volunteer.

Dr. Rebecca Rivera just taught 3 Fundamental Interventions and Referral and Safe Transfer (FIRST) courses to a total of 75 Clinical Officers in Sengerema, one of the more remote locations in our Safer Obstetrics in Rural Tanzania (SORT) project. She is a Canadian Obstetrician who grew up in rural Alberta after coming to Canada as child with her family as a political refugee from El Salvador. This is all part of the cross cultural CNIS volunteer experience.

Dr. Rivera states, "As a new volunteer for CNIS I was a little apprehensive about the task ahead, but upon arriving in Sengerema I was greeted with such warmth and appreciation for the work of CNIS. The local medical teaching staff were friendly, knowledgeable, dedicated and, most importantly, instrumental to the success of the FIRST course. It truly felt like a partnership. I feel confident that the skills learned by the young Clinical Officers will have a direct impact on patient care and improve surgical and obstetrical care for patients in rural Tanzania."

The Honorary Nigerian

Thirty five years after leaving Benue State in Nigeria, Dr. Ronald Lett returned to meet Dr. Martin Reedyk, an Albertan physician who has been returning to Nigeria twice a year since his 8 year tour of duty at the Mkar Christian Hospital where he had mentored Dr. Lett and many others.

The purpose of Dr. Lett’s visit was in response to Dr. Reedyk’s request of preparing the ground work for a CNIS project in Nigeria. Visits were made to principals, directors and deans at two Health Technology colleges, two midwifery colleges, the Benue State University Teaching Hospital, which has surgical and obstetrical residencies, as well as the Federal Medical Center, which has surgical, obstetrical and family practice residencies. The two also met with the executive secretary – the doctor in charge or the Benue State Hospital Management Board.

When the issue of sustainability is discussed often bureaucracies are looking at institutions or projects. But the reality is that sustainability is about human beings, their knowledge, skills and behaviors. The hospital at Mkar has seen better days, it may undergo a revival but even if it does not, the human resources that have spread from there throughout Benue State, Nigeria and beyond is certainly what real sustainability is about. The expectation for CNIS is also that the 25,000 learners who have participated in our courses since 1995 will sustain our vision of safer surgery, obstetrics and communities in Africa.
FIRST Course for Midwives, Tanga

A newly adapted Fundamental Interventions, Referral and Safe Transfer (FIRST) course was introduced at Tanga Nurses’ Training Centre, Tanzania, in December 2013. The initial two courses involved “pre-service” midwives, meaning nurses who have completed two-years of training and are now doing a specialty year in obstetrics before they will enter community practice for the first time.

In February, two further courses involved “in-service” midwives. These participants had on average 5-15 years of midwifery experience, and had returned to one year of additional education, focusing on complicated pregnancies.

Aiming to optimize the learning experience of both of these quite different groups, we maintained flexible timetables. The local instructors, including all of the tutors (instructors) at the nursing school, plus an Operating Room nurse and the head nurse in Labour and Delivery at the local hospital, lent invaluable expertise regarding each group’s strengths and learning needs.

Feedback from the students was enthusiastic, particularly regarding the opportunity for hands-on experience with simulation models, and we were encouraged by them to continue and expand the course.

These FIRST for Midwives courses were led by Drs. Ronald Lett, Christine Bloch and Jan Christilaw. Dr. Christilaw will be returning to Tanzania in May to introduce these courses at the nursing school in Dodoma, capital of Tanzania.

-Dr. Christine Bloch, Stratford ON

Traumatic Brain and Spine Injury Instructor’s Workshop

CNIS contributed a one day Traumatic Brain and Spine Injury (TBSI) Instructor’s course to a larger meeting at The First Hands on Neurotrauma Course for the East Central and Southern African Region sponsored by Cornell University. The TBSI course was led by Dr. Ronald Lett and Dr. Othman Wanin, a Dar es Salaam neurosurgeon who was once the Dar es Salaam Essential Surgical Skills (ESS) CNIS course director.

More than 42 health professionals attended the morning theoretical sessions and 18 completed the afternoon practical sessions, which were restricted to surgeons and senior surgical residents. They learned how to use simulation to teach craniotomy – elevation of depressed skull fractures –and traction for fractured necks. These 18 who are now certified instructors came from Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan, Nigeria and the USA. This course was supported by the Bondi Foundation of Chicago, Illinois USA.
CNIS Volunteers Sew their Time

For over a month now, Lorelei Robins and Marianne Cross have been volunteering as sewers, preparing material for the upcoming Essential Surgical Skills (ESS) course in Tanzania. The ESS course teaches African healthcare students lifesaving surgical skills, including obstetric emergencies. In order to give students the hands-on experience necessary to acquire skills for C-sections, CNIS simulation models are used to imitate the operation of a real life scenario. The two have been working on the simulation models for C-sections, particularly sewing together the episiotomy repair models. Their work entails measuring and cutting various fabrics, foams and fibers and sewing the materials by machine, and even using traditional thimbles and needles to sew sections by hand. The goal is to make the models look as realistic as possible. In total, they will complete 72 models in preparation for the upcoming courses in May and June of 2014.

Students Most Memorable Experiences in ESS and SOO Courses

The AMOS who recently completed the ESS and SOO courses were asked the following, “What were your most memorable experiences.” Here is what they had to say:

- Learning how to apply casting to a fracture
- Performing C-Sections and post-operative management
- Working on case studies and participating in skill sessions
- Remembering the mistakes I did before CNIS
- Learning knot tying after suturing a wound

The students also have a message for Canadians:
- Thank you for supporting CNIS so we can learn to save lives
- The course makes us feel comfortable to help our community

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Please Donate Today!