

In case it was not clear from our last email, we are actually now working ON a Mercy Ship! Our last few treks to Africa, e.g. in Uganda, The Gambia and Guinea, have been with small teams working inland. Now, once more we are regaining our “sea legs”.

It has been another full week of surgery, fortunately with no emergencies. The ship has one more week of surgery before preparing to leave Benin at the beginning of December.

This week we have done several more mandibulectomies for largish jaw tumours, a couple on children as young as 9 and 12 years. As it is near the end of the Outreach here, patients who have had mandibulectomies are returning for iliac crest bone grafts (where we take bone from the hip and mould it around the titanium plates we use to initially reconstruct the jaw). We can treat two such patients a day.



We have only managed to venture off the ship once this week, and this was to take a short walk before sunset. The whole of the hospital deck is windowless so it was great to see the setting sun and breathe some fresh air.



This is the view from our small cabin window. Many cabins have no porthole, so we are very fortunate. The port seems fairly busy which is good news economically for the country of Benin. Although our Ship takes up a berth that another Ship could utilise to unload its cargo, maybe we can also be seen as “Good News” for the country as we try to bring healing to those who have no other hope, physically or spiritually.



While we were walking along the dock we spotted the man in his dug out canoe. He was heading back to the fishing village located close to the ship.



Ann has been mostly running around collecting things during Tony's surgeries, but a couple of times she has managed to give him a 'helping hand'! Hope you like the matching 'monkeys' hats. These are thanks to our friend Sue Lord who has joined us this last week along with Caroline Rawson and Kay Rouse. The British presence has been considerably increased in the operating theatres.

Although initial postoperative infection rate has been very low, a significant number of patients have developed infections once they have left the Ship. Also, one boy who had previously been treated in a local Hospital came with MRSA and is in our isolation room. Antibiotics are now available in Benin for purchase without prescription, so people who do not understand their action are buying them and not taking the full course etc. MRSA is a new problem here as a result! Previously the problem was NO access to antibiotics!

Africa has a long way to go....

Well, that's all for now

With our love

Tony & Ann