

Emergency Medicine Development for Africa

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This year I have had the privilege to participate in the development of Emergency Medicine as a medical specialty in two distinct projects in Ethiopia and Ghana. After several years of positioning stakeholders in the Ministry of Health, Addis Ababa Regional Health Bureau, Addis Ababa University, and the Black Lion Hospital, the first official specialty training program began in Ethiopia in November 2010. Similarly in Ghana, Emergency Medicine is gaining recognition as an important component of the healthcare delivery system and one important player is the Ghana Ambulance Service.

Since 2007, I have been fortunate to participate in various continuing education programs and healthcare summits for emergency medicine in Ethiopia. In 2009, I was invited to continue to participate in the educational foundation for the fledgling department of Emergency Medicine at the Black Lion Teaching Hospital (BLH) in Addis Ababa. Alongside the University of Wisconsin, the American International Healthcare Alliance and People to People (an Ethiopian Diaspora healthcare organization) we developed curriculum for faculty specialty training in the US and Ethiopia for 4 attending physicians at BLH, as well as local training for resident and attending physicians, nurses and pre-hospital care workers in Addis. The ongoing curriculum allows for joint research and quality improvement measures within the newly formed Emergency Department. In November 2010, I return to Addis to kick off the Emergency Ultrasound training program along with faculty

from the University of Wisconsin and the Black Lion Hospital.

For Ghana, my role has been mostly that of a facilitator. The University of Florida College of Medicine-Jacksonville is hosting Dr. Ahmed Zakariah, director of the Ghana National Ambulance Service in a 6-week observational position in the Department of Emergency Medicine. In addition to learning about the administrative and patient care roles of specialized emergency physicians, Dr. Zakariah has had the opportunity to conduct interviews with Emergency Medical Services in Jacksonville and surrounding areas in order to learn about the training and dispatch procedures for pre-hospital personnel. Together, we will utilize this data to develop a strategy to improve the efficiency and efficacy of the ambulance service.

In November 2009, the African Federation for Emergency Medicine was established and both Ethiopia and Ghana are important players in the development of specialized emergency physicians and other emergency healthcare personnel. As the continent faces the rise of road traffic injuries and non-communicable diseases alongside the battles with infectious diseases, emergency medicine offers a strategy for efficient management and stabilization of acute illness and injury in Africa. I look forward to the continued opportunity to participate in the ongoing development, quality assurance and improvement and clinical research as the specialty of Emergency Medicine develops in Ethiopia, Ghana and throughout Africa.

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