



# BLESSINGS HOSPITAL

LUMBADZI, MALAWI

JULY 2012

N E W S L E T T E R

## Surgeries Begin!

*By Wes Gunn*

The women began lining up, and what a line it was! After more than 100 women filled the lobby of Blessings Hospital, they sat single file around the front and all the way up to M-1 Highway. Some women rode buses more than 6 hours for one reason--they heard there was help. A medical team of 28 Americans came to inaugurate the newly completed surgical center at Blessings Hospital. Headed by OB/GYN Dr. Ken Mitchell from Pensacola, FL, and Dr. Jeff Bennie from Nashville, TN, there was a modest goal of 10 surgeries for this first trip. A project that has been years in the making with dozens of construction volunteers and several financial supporters finally began to bear fruit as 8

women received the care that several had been longing for. In a country where only about 15 surgeons exist among a population of 15 million people (again, that's one surgeon for

later, many of the women said things like, "It was like you took us to America for this kind of care. We can't believe we were in Malawi."

This team performed many hysterectomies, removed several masses, and even operated on an emergency ectopic pregnancy.

Perhaps no story better illustrates our purpose of sharing Christ through medical care than what happened to Mrs. "Banda." She came to our clinic in severe pain, not knowing she had an ectopic pregnancy.

Without a working ultra-sound machine at the time, it was difficult for our screeners to diagnose the source of her pain. Shortly after being seen, she collapsed in the hallway when her fallopian tube burst. We placed her in a wheel chair and Dr. Mitchell made his



*Dr. Ken Mitchell & Lisa Cantrell operate on the first surgical patient on June 12, 2012*

one million people!) many non-emergency surgeries get pushed further out and delayed. Several women reported to us they had waited 8 or 10 years for a hysterectomy. During their follow up care several weeks



*The surgical team prays over the first patient prior to her surgery.*

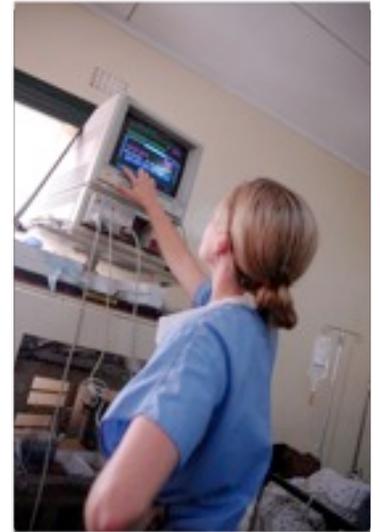
After hearing that our patient was not in a relationship with Jesus, she was able to look into her eyes and share with her, “Jesus sent us here for you. Jesus loves you very much.” That so beautifully weaves together what medical

believing that God had called us to this ministry. They dealt with dozens of problems, were patient with working out the kinks, and were very ingenious problems solvers with sometimes few resources. Zikomo kwambiri! Thank you!

assessment that she should be taken to emergency surgery. Without the presence of this team at Blessings Hospital, she most likely would have died before getting the treatment she needed. She received a successful operation that saved her life. The next day our recovery room nurse, Jenni Whitefield from Nashville, TN, wanted her to understand how serious her condition had been.

evangelism is about-- saving lives so that they have a chance to hear the gospel.

A special thanks to our amazing team who went into the “unknown” in faith,



*Recovery room nurse Jenni Whitefield monitors the first patient.*



*The screening line stretches to the road.*

## **Borehole Project Completed!**

Over the years as hundreds of volunteers have stayed at the Blessings Hospital complex, there was inevitably days (sometimes many days!) when no water was flowing from the water board utility. With the full opening of inpatient services and surgery, running out of



water, even for a day, was no longer an option. For three weeks prior to our surgical team arriving, Blessings Hospital had no water in the pipes. Mtendere Children’s Village was gracious enough to allow us to temporarily tap into their tanks so that surgery could happen. Yet a long term solution remained necessary. A generous donor stepped forward so we could rapidly get the project completed.

After bids were received and a geological survey of where we could find water, the drilling rig rolled on to campus on July 11, 2012 to drill 157 feet to find an ample supply of water. It was quite a show as all the children of Mtendere gathered around to watch the drilling rig. In fact, as the rig was drilling, we had been 8 days without running water. Praise God for this provision in helping us ensure successful operation of the hospital and our visiting teams to be able to take showers!

## Blessings Approved for ARV's

As we continue to take steps forward in the development of Blessings Hospital, one major goal was recently completed as the Malawi government approved Blessings to be an HIV/AIDS ARV (anti-retroviral) distribution point and counseling center. Through many donor nations, Malawi is able to offer free ARV medicines to help patients control their HIV. On July 5, 2012 our ARV clinic opened and will continue to function every Tuesday and Thursday. Recently our clinical officer, Chimwewe Kateka, completed his training in this program. The addition of this service is one more tool in combating HIV, along with the ministry of Dr. Bruce Smith, who is in progress with his Malawi medical license in HIV education and ministry.



*June 2012 Surgery Team*



*Shaliah Armstrong with lab tech Steven Phiri*



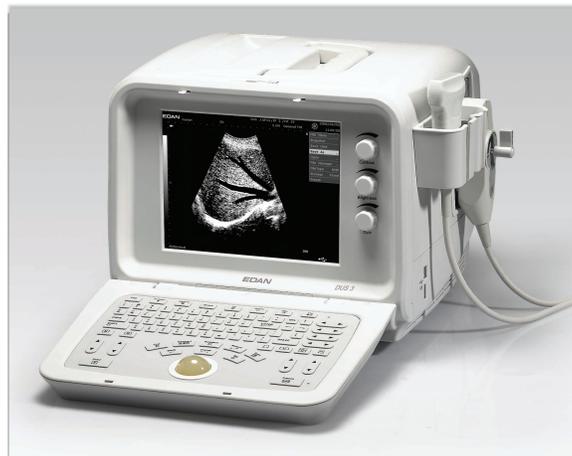
*A new cafeteria space was opened for teams and patients.*

## A New Ultrasound Machine On Order!

Can you imagine trying to diagnose a burst ectopic pregnancy without the help of an ultrasound machine? This was exactly the type of emergency situation Blessings faced during our surgical team visit in June.

After hearing about our broken and unrepairable ultrasound machine at Blessings, a young couple

at Landmark Church decided they would put down half of the \$5000 needed for a brand new machine and personally raise the rest themselves! In just a matter of weeks they sent out word they had reached their goal. We are in the processing of ordering the laptop size machine and should have it in Malawi by the first part of August. The staff at Blessings is beside themselves with excitement over this tool, as it is almost unheard of for women to obtain this service. Thank you for your generosity!



## How You Can Be Involved

Hundreds of us that have been a part of the work in Malawi are so excited to see the hospital begin reaching its potential after several rough years. With inpatient, outpatient, surgical, laboratory, & pharmacy services running wide open, the needs have also increased. Increased staff, greater volumes of drugs, and replacing equipment are just a few of the needs the hospital has. Here are a few ways for you to consider assisting this ministry:

1. Prayers for guidance of the staff, especially Harold Banda the administrator, so that the

facility will be successful, right staff will be hired, and for a breakthrough with the Malawi Nurses Council over the opening of the labor & delivery unit.



*George Chapman running the sterilizer unit*

2. Patient fees cover much of the regular hospital expenditures. But one of the most expensive parts is, of course, the doctor. For \$1100 a month we are able to hire a full-time doctor, who can also perform basic surgical procedures. Could your church take this

on for one year? Or could you personally commit to fulfilling this for one month?

3. A smaller amount of even just \$500 would go a very long way in restocking our increasingly used pharmacy.

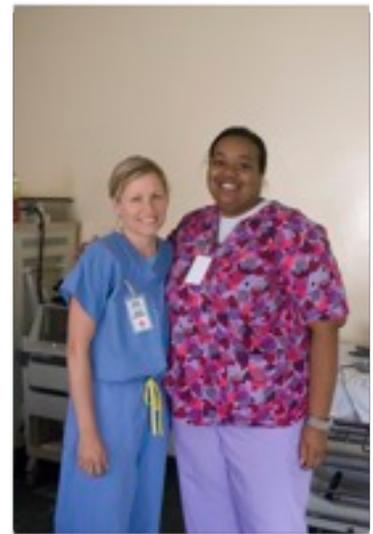
4. Future surgical trips are being planned already for November 2012 and in 2013. Do you know a surgeon, an RN, or a surgical tech? Would you mind pointing them to this ministry and pray for them to come to Malawi?

### Next Surgical Trip

November 2-11, 2012

GYN Trip

Recruiting nurses & helpers of all types!



*Nurses Jenni Whitefield & Monica Merriweather*

## Contact

For more information about Blessings Hospital or to put your name on a list of medical professionals interested in traveling on a surgical team in the future, please contact:

**Landmark Church of Christ**

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To make a financial gift for the hospital, please mark your check for "Blessings Hospital" in the memo line.

