

Kenyan Mission Trip

Linda Allyn BSN RN CPAN CAPA

I have been on mission trips to Guatemala so I thought I knew what to expect, but it was entirely different from previous trips. I left Austin at 12:30 pm on Wednesday, September 27, 2017, for Detroit. From Detroit, I flew 8 hours to Amsterdam. From Amsterdam, I flew another 8+ hours to Kenya. During all this flying, I also lost 8 hours of time, so I arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, at 10 pm on Thursday night.



There, we were assessed a duty for incoming medical supplies and charged for bringing in donations to help their country. We spent the night at a hotel in Nairobi. Friday morning we got up, loaded in three vans and made the rest of the trip to *Kenya Relief* in Migori. There were 15 of us in total and we stayed dorm style at Brittney's Home of Grace, our home for the rest of the week.

Brittney's Home of Grace is named after a girl who came to her parents one night after watching TV and said she wanted to sponsor a child from Kenya. Her dad told her she could, but she had to get a job to do that. Brittney was 16 at the time. This meant so much to her that she went out and got a job. She was in college and 19-years-old when she was found dead in her room at school the Friday after 9/11. Her dad was a CRNA and decided to take a trip to Kenya to do something in his daughter's name to honor her and carry on her passion. He was so moved that he started *Kenya Relief* in Brittney's name. Brittney's Home of Grace is on the land owned by *Kenya Relief*. Not only do they have the clinic, but they have an orphanage onsite that houses 97 orphans. On Friday afternoon, they welcomed us with signs with our names and sang in their native language and costumes.



Saturday was our rest day to get over our jet lag and eight-hour time change. On Saturday afternoon, we were invited to the local church and welcomed by the community. We then made a



home visit for three orphans who will be joining *Kenya Relief* in January. Their older sister cannot go with them

because they only take up to the age of 14 and she is already 13. She is planning on living with a married sister. They are living with an aunt right now who doesn't work and has a little boy of her own. The children were still wearing the same clothes that Devry (the missionary who runs the





orphanage with her husband) had found them in when she first heard about the children. They had no other clothes. We brought various size clothes and shoes for all the children. The shoes were too big for the three-year-old, but nobody was taking them off his feet. He had them on the following Tuesday when he came to the clinic to be treated for ringworm.

On Sunday, before we went to the clinic (across the road) we had places of honor at the orphanage and went to church with the children. Our team photographer is also a minister so he gave us a wonderful sermon (in English) on life and accomplishing whatever we want to in life.

We were off to the clinic ready to work. There was one pediatric surgeon and two adult general surgeons. They would see the possible surgery patients, and a pediatrician and nurse practitioner were seeing patients with various non-surgical problems. Over the course of three-and-a-half days, they saw 325 patients in the clinic part and we did 58 surgeries. I wish we could have done another day, but, with overnight patients, it was not possible.



The pre-op "unit" was the other half of the PACU. It consisted of four beds. When one person walked back to the OR, the next case would be called into the pre-op area and readied for surgery. There were curtains around the pre-op beds, but the PACU had no curtains. If you were lucky, you had eight inches



between beds. The sterile areas were only in the ORs, with families walking in the hall and PACU at random. With air-conditioning only in the ORs, open windows without screens were our only ventilation. It was warm in the PACU. The people there are so used to it, though. They were wanting blankets.



Most of the patients went home, but if they had drains they spent the night. The amazing thing about this was there weren't any patient rooms. These people would be walked outside and would be on cots until the surgeries were completed for the day. Their families would take care of them and the Kenyan nurse

would check on them periodically. When the cases were about completed, the patients would be brought back in the pre-op and PACU areas for the night with Kenyan nurses.

The strange thing about the ORs were that there were only two OR rooms. They would be doing two cases in one OR at the same time. This was a totally different idea for me. It is amazing, but there is a very low infection rate with the ORs being the only sterile area.



At the end of the day, we would gather after dinner and go around the room to discuss “highs and lows” about the days we had. Probably the biggest low was for the people in the clinic. They saw a 24-year-old woman who had stage 4 breast cancer. We couldn’t do anything but refer her to the big hospital in Nairobi. Another lady presented with a distended bladder and said she was having problems voiding for the last three days. She had cancer of the cervix with metastasis. Even with an interpreter, the only thing she questioned was would she still be able to have sex. She really didn’t comprehend the seriousness of her diagnosis. They believe in medical castration of the female, so she doesn’t get any pleasure out of sex. It is just to please the husband. They also believe in polygamy and still trade cows for wives amongst the tribes. These local cultures were very hard to comprehend.

On Thursday morning, the doctors made rounds and pulled the drains of the eight patients who had spent the night. They spent an hour trying to find something to make a scrotal support and actually found one. Our work was done and it was time to head for safari and south toward the Tanzania border. We were fortunate and saw the “big five” animals within 24 hours.

When I got home, my husband asked if I would go again. There is not a doubt in my mind that I would. It was not only helping others, but waking up at 5:30 in the morning to the children in the orphanage singing and seeing how the older children would take care of the younger brothers or sisters. They were happy even though they didn’t have parents. So many others were like the four orphans we went to visit with only the clothes on their backs. Food, along with schooling, were, most of the time, a luxury.



Thank you, ASPAN, for helping me reach this goal in my life and complete this amazing experience.

Photos courtesy of Curtis Coghlan, Kenya Relief.