

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia December 2017

On 15 December 2017 Neil Choon and Matt Fell travelled to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia to investigate the need for a collaboration in hand surgery. The trip was sponsored jointly by BFIRST and BSSH. This visit, consisting of 5 hospitals was to investigate the current situation of hand surgery in Ethiopia and explore the need for a collaboration. Hand injuries from trauma are a major problem in Ethiopia. Most patients are seen in the primary healthcare setting and referred through to the tertiary hospitals for treatment. Hand surgery is being performed in Addis by both orthopaedic and plastic surgeons in all 5 units visited. There was enthusiasm, from both orthopaedic and plastic surgeons, for a collaboration in hand surgery to develop. An educational hand surgery course for surgical trainees in the tertiary hospital setting would not solve the problems faced but would be a feasible way to start a collaboration and would enhance an orthoplastic hand surgery platform for future development.



Black Lion Hospital

Neil and Matt arrived at the orthopaedic department building to meet Dr Rick Gardner (Paediatric Orthopaedic surgeon at CURE) who introduced the head of the orthopaedic department Dr Biruk Wamisho. They attended the departmental trauma meeting then joined the team in theatre to get a feel for how things work. Dr Biruk gave a tour of the department before discussing the proposed hand surgery

collaboration at length over traditional Ethiopian injera and coffee.

The Black Lion Hospital (BLH) is the largest hospital in Ethiopia, with 1500 patients seen per day and a bed capacity of 1000. The BLH is closely associated with the Addis Ababa University and is the main teaching hospital in Ethiopia. Trauma accounts for 70% of the workload in the orthopaedic department. Hand injuries account for a significant proportion of the patient presentations but a small proportion of the operative caseload.

Yekatit 12 and CURE Hospital

Yekatit 12 is the centre for burns, cleft lip and palate in Ethiopia. Again, the caseload is dominated by trauma and 50% of that is hand trauma.

ALERT Hospital

Neil and Matt visited the plastic surgery department at ALERT Hospital to meet Dr



Atakiltie Baraki (President of the Ethiopian Plastic Surgery Society), and other senior plastic surgeons. The hand surgery collaboration was discussed at length with many creative ideas raised. Dr Abraham provided a tour of the department and we saw several post-operative patients on the wards, including two patients with posterior interosseous artery (PIA) pedicled flap reconstruction following release of 1st web burn contracture; and a patient undergoing hand therapy rehabilitation with the modified Kleinert Regime.

Teaching at Black Lion and COSECSA meeting Neil and Matt gave prepared lectures by request for the orthopaedic and general surgery residents years 1-4 (approx. 60 in attendance). Lecture topics included principles of soft tissue reconstruction in the upper limb, hand infections and tendon injuries.

Reflections

Ethiopia is the second-most populous country in Sub-Saharan Africa with a population of 99.4 million. Ethiopia is one of the world's oldest civilisations but is also one of the world's poorest countries. It still needs considerable investment and improved policies to reach its development objectives. Having identified the need for hand surgery training, BFIRST and BSSH will be planning to send a team to conduct a training workshop sometime in the near future.