

Project Update – Abuja, Nigeria

September 2018

In September 2018, a BFIRST team in collaboration with the Interburns charity visited the National Trauma Hospital in Abuja, Nigeria to run a comprehensive 3-day Burns Course. This was the second time a course had been held here and was run mainly by the Manchester team with two burns surgeons (Zeeshan Sheikh and Nadeem Khwaja), a pain consultant with a background in anaesthesia who is also the chair of the British Burns Association specialist interest group in pre-hospital burn care (Winston de Mello), a Liverpool based senior burns physiotherapist (Rachel Johnson) and the chairman of BFIRST (Wee Lam) who happens to be a hand surgeon. Later on, we were joined by Augustine Akali (Consultant Breast and Plastic Surgeon from Hull) who supported the team being originally from Nigeria and regularly travelling back for charitable work. The course programme was organised with the help of Interburns (thanks to Sian Falder – paediatric burn surgeon at Alder Hey and Tom Potokar – Director of Interburns). The course was held at the National Trauma Centre, which is the main hospital in Abuja and has an 8 bedded burns unit where we had the opportunity to see some of their burn care facilities and practices which were good considering the limitations in funding and facilities. Unfortunately, as patients have to pay directly for treatment owing to the lack of a broad-based health insurance scheme, access to advanced dressing care and regular surgery visits is not as accessible as it is in the UK causing significant morbidity and mortality. Standard hospital burn care is hampered by inadequate facilities, infrastructure and a paucity of adequately trained staff so this course was well received by all.



The course consisted of lectures, small group discussions with practical sessions and input with a lecture from a Nigerian consultant discussing burn care in Nigeria. This allowed us to connect with the participants early on.

There were 43 participants consisting of consultants, registrars, nurses and physiotherapists all involved in burn care from various units all over Nigeria. They enjoyed the practical sessions especially splint fabrication, and small group discussion on psychology, nutrition, dressings, and learning how we work together as a team in an MDT.



On arrival in Abuja. From left to right – Rachel Johnson (Senior Physiotherapist), Winston de Mello (Pain/Anasthetic Consultant), Wee Lam (BFIRST Chairman), Abdulrasheed Ibrahim (Nigerian Consultant Plastic Surgeon and host), Zeeshan Sheikh (Burns & Plastics Consultant), Nadeem Khwaja (Burns and Plastics Consultant)

On the final day, all participants were presented with an attendance certificate endorsed by BFIRST, Interburns and NAPRAS (the Nigerian equivalent of BAPRAS) and photographed. It was decided that another burns course should occur and to encourage the participants to make on arrival in Abuja Mr Zeeshan Sheikh, Consultant Plastic Surgeon, Manchester Burns Unit, UK a positive change in their respective units, they would need to take an element from the course and implement a change in their unit, audit the change and present this at the next burns course. Prizes in 3 categories would be given for nurses, therapists and doctors. Also, in order to demonstrate nationally the difficulties, the burns team work in, and the limited resources they have, they were considering inviting politicians to the next course.

Mr Zeeshan Sheikh, Consultant Plastic Surgeon at Manchester Burns Unit, UK

