

Dar Es Salaam, TANZANIA

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This was the second BFIRST/ BSSH trip to Tanzania. Our first visit was in December last year, and was essentially a scoping mission. Having received a request for help from Temeke Hospital in Dar Es Salaam, BFIRST and BSSH quickly put together a team comprising of several consultant plastic and hand surgeons, as well as one trainee. It quickly became apparent that there was a huge need for both Orthopaedics and Plastic Surgery, particularly in relation to Lower Limb Injuries and Burns Injuries to the hands in children. Our mission comprised 3 fundamental aims:

- Teaching and Training
- Capacity Building
- Equipment Provision

We treated paediatric burns contractures (mostly in the hands, with Z-plasties and full



thickness skin-grafts), but we were also presented with a few complex orthopaedic cases as well as one case of severe post-burns flexion contractures of the groins/hips. The latter case was managed with bilateral islanded, pedicled, myocutaneous anterolateral thigh flaps, possibly the first time this has been done in this way, for this indication in Tanzania.

There were cases we could not treat, such as Apert's hands and cleft palates – none of this team were trained congenital hand surgeons or cleft surgeons. We don't do this at home, so we aren't going to start in Tanzania. So we have deferred them to a future visit, which we hope will comprise of congenital hand surgeons, hand therapists and a cleft team.

We made a good initial assessment of what is lacking in these units.

Basic ortho instruments are needed, neither hospital has intra-operative x-rays, and one of the hospitals will need to ensure that orthopaedic surgery can be carried out in an environment which isn't compromised by other emergencies such as emergency obstetric cases. Hand therapy, speech therapy and orthodontics for clefts are totally absent. We are hoping to help solve these with time.

We also met with a senior representative in the Ministry of Health of Tanzania. The report from this visit will be presented to the Ministry, and we hope to then target future efforts from BFIRST and BSSH as per the needs identified, as always with the emphasis of enabling local teams to better manage



their patients themselves, rather than us, as outsiders, coming in to 'save the day'. The ultimate aim is for Tanzania to be able to produce their own 'Board Certified' plastic surgeons (no local programme for this exists), with a local curriculum and examination. This should lead to an increase in capacity and hopefully attract the finances to provide more equipment.



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