

Graham & Jenny

October 31, 2009

Shipment arrives during lagoon festival

Another busy but varied week in Munda. The arrival of a man with gas gangrene + maggots drove the other patients out of the nearby beds + resulted in amputation the next day.

Fortunately he is now doing well. Our shipment from the UK arrived rather unexpectedly on Friday evening. It was enroute to Noro port on the north of the island, but we were able to intercept it nearby as it was unloading oil cans. The additional kitchen ware will make entertaining easier and we are delighted to be reunited with our bikes.

There has been a sea festival this weekend in Lambete (at the other end of the airstrip). We saw the war canoes (tomokos) arriving during the week from outlying places + were treated to a magnificent display with the men's painted bodies + head wear. There was also a swim race, but unfortunately we couldn't take part as we should have registered the previous day. There was also a fishing competition with half the fish being donated to the hospital for patient meals.

Today there will be an open air service which we hope to attend.

October 24, 2009

Hospital life

Another busy week at Helena Goldie Hospital. General ward is nearly full at present. The work is very varied with lots of infection (abscesses which need draining & then dressing), trauma & medical conditions. Thyrotoxicosis with exophthalmos (bulging eyes) gives a startling appearance in a Solomon Island face. Quite often in the evenings & at night the ward is looked after by one nurse aide. Last night some local people under the influence of alcohol turned up at

the O.P.D. This was quite a challenge for us to manage with such a skeleton staff looking after a number of ill patients. The hospital struggles financially, relying on some government support & donations from charities & churches in New Zealand & Australia. The government recently cut the medical budget by 35%, as a direct result of the global financial crisis. Outside financial support remains invaluable.

October 20, 2009

Paddling the Pacific

It seems to be getting hotter here again. A week without rain had people worrying about their water tanks. The sunsets + night skies are beautiful. The sky is often lit by lightening + followed by the distant rumble of thunder. If the rain comes it is often torrential + it's like being in a tent as it drums down on the corrugated roof of our house.

At the weekend we had our first trip in our neighbours' dug-out canoe. We caused great amusement when we capsized immediately, but improved with Graham paddling + Jenny trying to maintain her balance! We made it to the island of Nusa Zonga half a mile offshore, where the first missionary landed in 1902. He lived there until he felt safe enough to move to the main island in the days of head hunting. We returned after a swim to find Joyce anxiously awaiting our arrival.

October 14, 2009

Tsunami update

It is now 3 months since we left the UK. Such a lot seems to have happened in that time. Graham was in Honiara again last week at the national TB workshop. He left immediately after assisting in theatre with a lady who had arrived by canoe, bleeding with placenta preavia. She survived, but

unfortunately the baby died. Many women still arrive, having had no ante natal care, from rural destinations. Ectopic pregnancies are also quite common.

There are lots of workshops + meetings organized in Honiara, which are important, but quite disruptive to the running of the hospital. There has also been a measles campaign with some of the nurses out visiting in the community. We are quite short staffed anyway due to cost cutting measures caused by the global financial crisis, but generally moral is good + people enjoy working here. The earthquake last week, followed by a low level tsunami warning caused a lot of anxiety with some people retreating to higher ground in the bush. The tsunami here in 2007 is still fresh in people's memory, although there was no significant destruction or loss of life here at Helena Goldie Hospital. We have contingency plans to evacuate if necessary.

October 7, 2009

Morning devotions

Working in a Christian hospital where each day begins with lotu (time of worship) and there is prayer with the patient before every operation is a very different experience to working in the N.H.S. We sing, pray, read from the Bible and someone shares a few thoughts.

The theme for September was "bearing good fruit". We looked at the difference between a life lived according to the flesh & one according to the Spirit. I was struck by the fact that the fruits listed under the Spirit reveal to us the nature of God.

"Compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another, forgiving one another and above all these love."

What an amazing God!