

NEWSLETTER KUMI HOSPITAL UGANDA

NEWSLETTER NO

11-25

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ORTHOPAEDIC MEDICINE STUDENTS OF UGANDA INSTITUTE OF ALLIED HEALTH AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES-MULAGO.



The road to Kumi Hospital Ongino was long, winding through vast landscapes and bustling village markets. As the second-year and third-year orthopaedic students from UIAHMS Mulago, this journey was more than just miles covered, it was a passage into the realities of rural healthcare, where our skills and compassion would be tested beyond the confines of lecture halls and textbooks.

Upon arrival to Kumi hospital Ongino, a beacon of hope for individuals with orthopedic challenges in Uganda, we were met with warm smiles from the hospital staff and eager patients awaiting care. The placement program was designed to immerse us in community health and primary healthcare outreach, focusing on rehabilitation programs for individuals with mobility challenges, carry out community diagnosis and promoting community-based health care (CBHC) initiatives.

Orthopedic community-based rehabilitation (CBR) focuses on empowering individuals with physical disabilities to regain independence within their communities with limited access to specialized care in rural areas. The outreach team bridges the gap, offering life-changing interventions to patients who might otherwise be forgotten.

Each morning, we could divide into small groups in various wards/departments, conducting assessments, assisting in surgical preparations, overseeing physiotherapy sessions and carrying out nutritional screening. We met a young boy recovering from neglected clubfoot surgery, an elderly farmer battling osteoarthritis, and a woman injured in a motorcycle accident, children battling with cerebral palsy, Blount's disease among others. Not forgetting those with bilateral gluteal fibrosis (BGF), a condition only common in eastern regions particularly Kumi. Each case is a reminder of the pressing need for orthopaedic care in underserved areas.

One of the most heart-warming moments was meeting a team of flying orthopedic surgeons from Netherlands led by Dr. Van Norel who conducted an orthopedic camp to correct neglected deformities, leaving smiles in the faces of many and restoring hope for those who had lost hope in life.



A team in theatre carrying out tendo-achilles lengthening (TAL) and tibialis posterior tendon transfer (TPTT) of a patient with neglected club foot.

The most interesting of it was that surgeries benefitted not only the natives of the area but also those from neighboring districts and those from other parts of the country.

Beyond treatment, we also engaged in community-based rehabilitation programs, venturing into villages particularly Aakum-Aakum to educate families on proper post-injury care and preventive measures. We conducted workshops, demonstrating simple exercises that could make a world of difference in someone's recovery. We also conducted the community health PHC outreaches, focusing more on immunization of children under 5 years, carrying out community diagnosis and identifying the challenges affecting them most, as this is one of the most important aspect of the SDG's as per the Alma-Ata.



A team of orthopedic students carrying out ophthalmological screening during a community outreach.

As weeks passed, we grew in confidence, guided by experienced mentors who encouraged us to think critically and work collaboratively. We faced challenges such as limited resources, language barriers, and the emotional weight of patients' hardships but we also witnessed resilience, the unwavering hope in the eyes of those we helped.



A team of orthopedic students immunizing children during a community outreach program.

As the program comes to an end, we extend our sincere gratitude to Kumi Hospital administration, the working staff, social workers, VHTs and the community members, not forgetting our dear principal tutor for making it a success during our placement. When we return to Mulago, we shall be carrying not just medical knowledge but a newfound appreciation for the transformative power of our field. The community placement was more than an academic requirement, it was a defining chapter in our journey to becoming compassionate professionals.



Orthopedic students during community-based rehabilitation (CBR) outreach program in Aakum village, Kumi.



Orthopedic students during home visiting and community diagnosis in Aakum village, Ongino, Kumi.

Prepared by Teko Zachary (3rd year orthopedic student, Uganda Institute of Allied Health and Management Sciences - Mulago Kampala) May 2025.



All the Orthopedic students gathered (9 May 2025)



Orthopedic students in practice with a young patient at Kumi Hospital



Orthopedic students receive explanations in various departments at Kumi Hospital

NILS, MEDICAL ELECTIVE STUDENT

Together with two other Dutch medical students, I did a 3-month internship at Kumi Hospital. The whole experience has been really valuable for me. I learned a lot about the local healthcare, the culture and the country. On top of that, I have met many amazing people and had great conversations about medicine, Kumi and life in general. The experience was even better because of our stay at the Electives guesthouse, with guest ladies Agnes and Margaret creating a home for all of us.



During the internship I saw a lot of medical conditions that are uncommon in the Netherlands. Examples are malaria, cerebral palsy and leg deformities because of nutritional deficiencies. Also patients present at the hospital with conditions at a later stage than I am used to. For example, some patients come to the O.P.D. with foot ulcers that are already severely necrotized, instead of a smaller non-healing wound on the foot. Also, I have been on many outreaches, where I have really enjoyed screening, testing and vaccinating people together with colleagues from Kumi Hospital. I was impressed that sometimes a relatively big proportion of the people screened during an outreach were in need of treatment at the hospital. The examples mentioned, showed me that there are inequalities in healthcare at many different levels. Being aware of these inequalities and looking at the context of a patient, will be something I will continue to do during my career.



For this newsletter, I would like to specifically talk about the surgical camp in May. In two weeks time, I was able to attend many consultations and surgeries performed by two Dutch orthopedic surgeons. I noticed the surgical camp was a real team effort, with everyone's role being equally important. Working closely together with the team was a great experience for me. The orthopedic surgeons shared their expertise about the medical conditions, the theatre nurses helped me when suturing, and the supporting personnel always made sure there were scrubs to use. I hope that many patients got helped and will continue to benefit from the surgical camp for the long-term.

Concluding, it has been a very valuable internship and the surgical camp was a great addition to my learning experience. I wish the staff, patients and friends I have made all the best for the future! Hopefully we may meet again.

Nils Woltman

Medical student at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands, with fifth-year clinical internships taking place at the affiliated Deventer Hospital.



Janneke Versteegh, Maud Hubbelmeijer and Nils Woltman donated 10 oxygen cylinders including accessories.

Hearfelt Thank You to Our Friends from the Netherlands

We are immensely grateful to the group of medical students from the Netherlands for their generous donations to our hospital. Your kindness and thoughtfulness directly benefit our patients and support the dedicated work of our staff.

From 2021 to the present, the medical students have supported our hospital with oxygen cylinders. Your gesture reminds us that compassion knows no bounds and that together we can make a real difference in healthcare. On behalf of our patients, staff, and the entire hospital community: thank you for your generosity and friendship.

James Okweny

Senior Hospital Administrator

The Adesso Primary School of Kumi Ongino

In General

Kumi is not only a great place to visit as a student or a healthcare worker. The Adesso Primary School is home to over 1,000 pupils and 17 enthusiastic teachers who are eager to meet new people and collaborate with visitors from other countries. The school consists of classes from Primary 1 (P.1) to Primary 7 (P.7). With the motto "Seek wisdom," the team teaches a variety of subjects in English, including English, mathematics, science (physics/chemistry/biology), and social studies (geography/history). During the lunch break, the teachers are well taken care of with a serving of posho and beans, a local dish. The children also receive lunch and are served porridge. In addition to the core subjects, there is plenty of room for sports on the large field next to the school, and music is so deeply rooted in the culture that musical activities are an essential part of school life. For children who live farther away, the school also offers a boarding option. The school has a big dream: to provide quality education to all children so they can look forward to a bright future. With passion and encouragement, the school aims to help every child achieve good results.



Personal Experience

My name is Hannelore ten Cate and I'm a volunteer at the Adesso School. Since my boyfriend was doing his medical internship at Kumi Hospital, I got in touch with the school and arranged to work there for three months.

I was welcomed with open arms by the team – something that quickly proved to be a defining feature of the local culture. The differences with education in the Netherlands are significant, mainly due to the limited resources available for teaching and enriching lessons. Still, there is so much to learn from how education works here.

Each teacher designs their lessons directly based on the national curriculum, which makes them very intentional and reflective in how they teach – without relying on fixed textbooks or pre-made methods. Lessons are packed with clear, explicit instruction and well-defined learning goals.

I quickly realized how valuable this experience was: I built confidence in teaching large groups (80+ students), strengthened my basic teaching skills, and learned about the local culture and language.

I taught English in P.5, P.6, and P.7. The people I met treated me as a true colleague and taught me a great deal.

There was also a strong interest in my background and in the Dutch education system. I had great conversations about how our system works, what our lessons look like, and how relationships function in our classrooms. We learned from each other as equal professionals with different backgrounds.

I can wholeheartedly recommend coming to Kumi and volunteering at the school.



Who Is Welcome?

Both students and graduates are welcome to volunteer at the school. You can help by teaching and supporting where needed, but there are also meaningful roles for education specialists or pedagogues.

There are pupils with different learning needs, health challenges, or behavioral and academic difficulties. It's a valuable exchange for both the school and the volunteer to share ideas and practical skills.

The school is especially keen on welcoming teachers or educators who also bring a personal passion: maybe you're into sports and can help develop the PE lessons, or you're musically gifted and can bring more music into the classrooms.

In short: the possibilities are wide, and the welcome is warm!

What Does a Week as a Volunteer Look Like?

A volunteering week can be four or five days long. If you plan a long weekend away, three days is also possible in consultation with the school.

You start the day with breakfast at your guesthouse before walking to school. If you're teaching, you'll first decide which subject and which class you'll be working with. At the beginning of the week, you'll look at what lessons you can teach. You can prepare them either at school or in your free time.

Your day may include classroom visits, supporting teachers with their tasks, or even giving a small training like "how to use a computer" to staff.

On other days, you'll teach your lessons, do some grading, and spend lots of time interacting with the teachers.

At lunch, you return to your guesthouse where you'll enjoy a homemade meal – the same goes for dinner.

Beyond your duties, there's also room for your own ideas and initiatives, both on and around the school grounds. You can even visit the nearby hospital – they're very welcoming and are happy to show you how things work there.

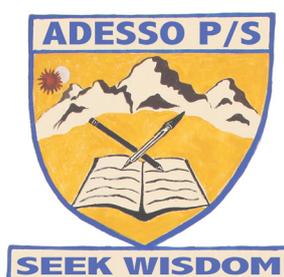
After your workday, you can go to Kumi Town for shopping or a drink, and on long weekends, you can explore other parts of Uganda (a list of travel tips is available on this website).



If this sounds like something for you – if you're curious about the culture, enjoy working with children, and are ready for the challenge of teaching large groups – you can contact Alex Abal. He is the local coordinator for both the hospital and the school and will gladly help you arrange your visit. (kumihospital.org)

If you have questions about my experience, feel free to reach out to me via Instagram DM: [@hanneloretencate](https://www.instagram.com/hanneloretencate)

The Adesso School is looking forward to your arrival!



Member of the British Empire

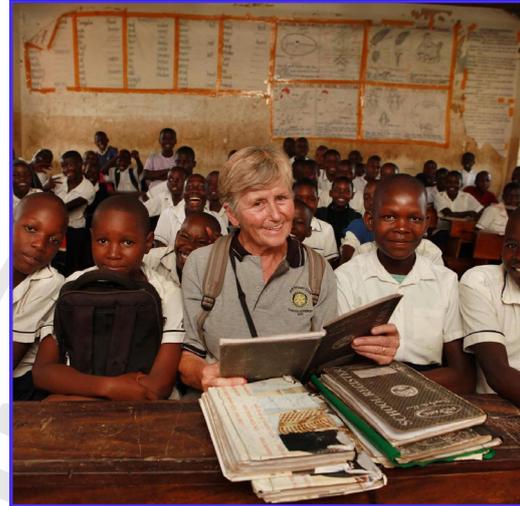
December 2024

The Kumi Community Foundation is delighted to announce that Elspeth Robinson, founder and Chairman of the charity, has been awarded an MBE by his Majesty the King. The honour has been awarded for services to Disabled People in Kumi, Eastern Uganda.

Very well deserved !!!

Please join us in congratulating Elspeth and spreading the word near and far.

We are so proud of you Elspeth!!!!



June 21, 2025

Huge congratulations to the founder of Kumi Community Foundations, Elspeth Robinson MBE.

Elspeth received her award from Prince William at Windsor Castle earlier today. She is pictured with her wonderful husband Christopher.

Such a well deserved recognition for her dedication to the charity and to the people of Kumi in eastern Uganda.



The Kumi Community Foundation, in partnership with PhysioNet, organized a distribution of assistive devices for people with disabilities in Kumi. A team of volunteers, including physiotherapists specializing in seating comfort, occupational therapists, and technicians, managed the distribution in Kumi from late October to November 2024.

Excerpts from the KCF Foundation's Facebook diary.

By Lynne Mosher, KCF Trustee

May 24, 2024

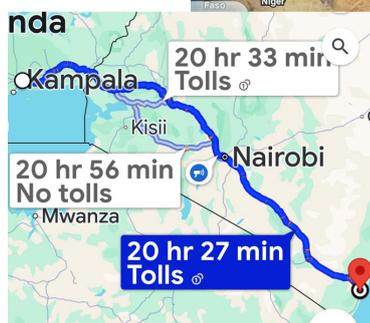
A fantastic morning preparing the 12-meter-long shipment of donated equipment that we will be sending to Kumi this summer. In partnership with PhysioNet, we will be sending approximately 160 wheelchairs, 50 walkers, 40 rollators, 200 pairs of crutches, and some specialized pediatric equipment to Kumi Hospital. A team of physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and technicians from the UK will travel to Kumi at their own expense to fit the equipment to our clients on the waiting list! We are thrilled with the progress of this project and the tremendous benefits these equipment will bring to people with disabilities in Uganda! A huge thank you to all the PhysioNet volunteers for all their hard work collecting and refurbishing unwanted mobility equipment across the UK and shipping it to areas where it's needed most.

These wheelchairs make a huge difference to someone with a disability. The donation of a wheelchair can restore someone's dignity, allowing them to get back on their feet and be part of the community, go to school, church, or even work.



On May 25th, our container was fully loaded with over 825 mobility aids—ranging from specialized children's wheelchairs to adult wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, and canes. The container was transported from Boroughbridge to Teesport in Middlesbrough, where it departed by sea to Mombasa, Kenya. From there, it will be

transported by land to Kampala and finally to Kumi Hospital. Thanks to the wonders of modern technology, we can track the container's progress! After leaving Teesport, it traveled to Rotterdam, arriving on June 6th, where it was unloaded and transferred to another ship to begin its journey south on June 14th. It is now en route to Salalah, Oman, where it is expected to arrive on July 16th. It will then proceed to Mombasa, where it will be unloaded to begin the next leg of its journey! For those interested, it has already traveled over 292 miles (254 nautical miles) and will ultimately travel another 10,984 miles (9,545 nautical miles) to reach Mombasa!



Our shipping container containing 825 mobility aids has finally arrived in Africa! The container arrived at the port of Mombasa, Kenya, on July 29th. It has been unloaded and is awaiting clearance at the port to be loaded onto a truck for the next leg of its overland journey to Kampala, Uganda. Although Google Maps suggests this is an easy 20-hour journey, after many journeys on African roads, we know it's going to be a bumpy ride! Once the container arrives in Kampala, it has to clear Ugandan customs before it can be unloaded and transferred to another truck for its final journey to Kumi. There are still many stages to go before the equipment reaches the hospital, but the team in Uganda—Alex in particular—is doing a fantastic job ensuring all the paperwork (and there's quite a bit of it!) is completed correctly! A huge shout-out to him for his collaboration with all the relevant agencies in Africa. The container is expected to arrive in Kampala on August 10th.

And off we go... The northern members of the eight volunteers who went to Kumi this weekend met at Darlington Station to begin their journey to Uganda. The team will meet the others at Heathrow later this evening for our flight to Entebbe. We're spending Saturday evening in Entebbe before embarking on our long bus journey to Kumi on Sunday, to begin distributing mobility aids at Kumi Hospital on Monday. We're so excited to be part of KCF's Distribution Camp!!



Distribution Day One: It was a long day, from 8:30 a.m. until after 7:00 p.m. This morning we sorted the equipment and met the team here. In the afternoon, we saw 14 children with complex medical conditions and placed them in wheelchairs.

Distribution Day Two: Today we helped 57 people with mobility aids. A huge number! We worked hard to do our best and united as a team, both in the UK and Uganda.

Distribution Day Three: The day began with a tour of the hospital. It was wonderful to see the various departments, but the state of the buildings was also a real eye-opener. It's hard to imagine how much equipment is discarded in the UK that could be of great use in Kumi.

Back on our department, Paul Ekellot, a team member and a medical social worker at Kumi Hospital, led us in a moment of worship. It was wonderful to hear their singing and prayers.

People began arriving, and we registered them as usual. They are of all ages and with all kinds of disabilities. Some come with a new cane or crutches, but others have very complex needs.

Although the team tries to stick to the list for the day, extra people always arrive, and it's very frustrating to turn them away. Usually, the therapists, who work tirelessly, also make time to see these extra clients. If they can't be helped, their names and information are recorded and referred for the next wheelchair shipment. Today was especially challenging because many people hadn't registered on the list. This made it very difficult, but it didn't stop the therapist from seeing as many people as possible. As always, there are many truly encouraging stories, some of which are from today's event below.



The Kumi Hospital logo is a leaf branch and fruit of the *Hydnocarpus Wightianus* or chaulmoogra tree. Chaulmoogra Marotti seed oil has been widely used in traditional Indian medicine (Ayurveda) and Chinese medicine. It entered early Western medicine in the nineteenth century before the era of sulfonamides and other antibiotics for the treatment of several skin diseases and leprosy. Chaulmoogra is given intravenously and might have calming- and fever-reducing properties and activity against skin disorders.

Kumi Hospital Ongino

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Graphic design & publication: www.janpath.eu

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