Brown Kenya Program: The Growth of a Progressive Partnership
‘It takes only one person’s efforts to change the world’

JANE CARTER, MD

Initiated in 1997, the Brown Kenya Medical Exchange Program was the first program to engage medical trainees and practitioners from all levels at Brown Medical School within a structured partnership with a low-income country partner medical school. Like many life successes, it grew out of some serendipity coupled with determination, dedication and long-term enthusiasm.

Moi University – Indiana University Partnership
In 1988 three faculty members of Indiana University (IU) traveled the world to identify a medical school with which to partner. Dr. Joe Mamlin, at that time the chairman of medicine at IU, dreamed of replicating an exchange program that he had led as a Peace Corps volunteer following his residency. That original program had been the first medical school in Afghanistan partnering with IU, a program that thrived until the advent of the Afghan-Soviet wars. Dr. Mamlin and his former chief resident, Dr. Robert Einterz, and several other IU faculty settled on Moi University School of Medicine (MUSOM) in Eldoret, Kenya. The essentials needed were in place – Moi University (MU) would open its doors in 1990. The curriculum was in English. The MU dean and the chairman were receptive to the exchange program. When the doors of the medical school opened in 1990, Dr. Einterz was the first U.S. faculty member living there for a year.

Asante (American Sub-Saharan Network for Teaching and Education) Consortium
The backbone of the exchange was set. Moi students rotated to IU for six weeks in their clinical years and IU students, residents and faculty rotated to MU. However, Drs. Einterz and Mamlin realized that despite the large faculty at IU, a single faculty in the United States could not sustain a continuous presence on the ground to contribute to care and teaching at MU. Thus, they started looking for partners to join a consortium. Asante had a double meaning – ‘thanks’ in Kiswahili but also an acronym for the American Sub-Saharan Network For Teaching and Education.

First Brown University Involvement
In 1996, Dr. Charles Sherman, pulmonary physician and faculty member at Brown, happened to glance at the ACP Observer, a journal he did not usually read. There was an advertisement from the IU group about its exchange, seeking volunteers. Dr. Sherman, having traveled through East Africa before medical school, approached one of the medical chief residents, Dr. Greg Kelly, and the two were off for a month of teaching and care. Both returned with one of the most common statements of all participants to date – “That was the most important experience of my career.” Dr.

Dr. Jonathon Cohen, a T32 HIV training fellow at Brown, traveled to Kenya for one year to assist in training staff and staffing the clinic at Mosoriot.

Dr. Liz Dufort with one of her patients.
Sherman shared his experiences with two other pulmonary colleagues, Dr. Jane Carter and Dr. Jim Myers, both of whom signed up for a month rotation. Within a year, Drs. Sherman, Carter and Myers had met with the dean of the Brown Medical School to discuss formal Brown Medical School inclusion in the program. Signing a bilateral MOU between MU and Brown paved the way for trainee credits and bilateral tuition waivers.

**Early Asante Years**

By 1999, The Asante Consortium included not only Brown but four other U.S. medical schools or university-based hospitals collaborating with Moi. Two MU medical students were hosted each year for six weeks of training at a U.S. institution, with all costs covered, and Moi University hosted four U.S. students throughout the year on a monthly rotational basis.

In 2000, not long after coming to Brown from Pittsburgh, Dr. Edward Wing, ID physician with a special interest in HIV as well as the chairman of the Department of Medicine, agreed to accompany Dr. Carter to review the program. Moved by the scope of the program – both in care, education and with a potential for research, Dr. Wing returned from that first visit to adopt the Brown Kenya Program formally into the Department of Medicine as a chairman’s initiative. With this support, Brown became the second most active Asante partner, increasing the number of medical students training at Brown as well as supporting internal medicine residents form Kenya for six-month rotations.

**AMPATH Development**

Coincident with the development of the Asante Consortium, another health disaster was spreading across the globe, particularly through Sub-Saharan Africa – the HIV epidemic. In 2000 at MUSOM, HIV patients dominated the wards with a universal mortality. The courage of two Moi University medical students changed the mindset of the entire faculty – both U.S. and Kenyan. The two students had grown up together and both been admitted to medical school – an unusual coincidence considering that less than 250 individuals in the country matriculated into med school. When one did not return to school post-vaca
tion, the second went looking for his friend and found him in a local hospital being treated for military TB. The friend arranged for transport back to Moi Referral Hospital where fellow students watched over him. His friend convinced him to be tested for HIV; the test was positive. On discharge from
the hospital, the patient walked back to the hostel to rejoin school but he was barred at the entrance by the staff. After several nights of sleeping on the grounds of the hospital, his friend declared that, “I am a medical student and I know how HIV is transmitted. My friend will be my roommate. There is nothing to fear.” This bravery in the face of overwhelming stigma galvanized the faculty. That student was treated with donated antiretrovirals. The first HIV-care grant was written and funded by the Gates Foundation for a pilot of 50 patients, could they be treated.

In December 2001, Dr. Wing returned to Moi University and sat next to Dr. Joe Mamlin to train him in HIV care. The Academic Model for Prevention and Treatment of HIV (AMPATH) was started. Brown was involved in the opening of the first of the rural health centers – Mosoriot Health Center – as well. Dr. Jonathon Cohen, a T32 HIV training fellow at Brown, traveled to Kenya for one year to assist in training staff and staffing the clinic at Mosoriot. Today there are 35 main clinics and 29 satellite clinics providing care for countless patients throughout Western Kenya.

AMPATH Consortium today
Today AMPATH has changed the acronym for which it stands – it is now the Academic Model for Providing Access to HealthCare. The same infrastructure that was built to provide care for individuals with HIV is now being used to build a primary-care infrastructure to address non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Six North American institutions (including Brown) remain, which underpin the medical exchange program, while over 20 other institutions are involved in the research programs. In 1997 there were no opportunities to train beyond an internship at Moi, now there are now residency programs in all the major fields there as well as the beginnings of subspecialty tracks.

The goal of training physicians – whether they are Kenyan or American – as global leaders remains. The underlying mission of the collaboration remains: Lead with Care. The underlying story of AMPATH remains – it takes only one person’s efforts to change the world.

Author
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