

PLASTIC SURGERY CAMP MARCH 2016 (Nigeria)



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Team:

Cees Spronk	Plastic surgeon, leader of the team
Floris de Graaf	Plastic surgeon
Gert Scheepstra	Anaesthesiologist
Ingrid de Visser	Anaesthesia assistant
Geesje Bonhof	Anaesthesia assistant
Annet Brouwer	Operation assistant
Rolien Koomans	Operation assistant
Patrick Ferdinandus	Plastic surgeon (trainee) (report)

Hospital COCIN Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre, Mangu

Saturday (the trip)

Most people probably arrived at Schiphol at a more convenient time than we did, but our energy level is remarkably high! During the flight to Frankfurt we are scattered about the plane, but fortunately we can group together during the second part of the flight.



However, this does not lead to much interaction because most of us slept little so a nap was welcome. Immediately after leaving the plane we traditionally experience our first power cut, reminding us what we are facing. Immigration keeps us waiting but Customs are faster and then we meet Kefas and 'his team' outside the airport.

Saturday night

The first night we sleep in the nunnery in DRACC. The modern nuns fortunately have an excellent wifi-network, enabling us to inform those who stayed at home about our safe trip. After a delicious meal with a very special beer (Orojin), we all went to bed early and slept like a log as dr. Spronk said the next morning.

Sunday

Rain, extremely much rain for the time of the year. We heard the rainfall during the night, similar to the Dutch weather, which is fine after all, because having to spend seven hours in a car is done best when it's not too hot. We had many military checks on our way, but only saw happy faces. After our last stop where we bought some small distasteful bananas we arrived at the Cocin Hospital in Mangu at half past two. Quickly we decided who would share rooms after which we met the locals. Waiting for supper we watched a match of women's soccer at a field nearby. Soon we were wondering if we went to watch the game or to be watched.



On our way we learned a few words of Hausa with which we greet everyone.



After our first meal prepared by Fibi it is time for leisure with a wine and a game.

Monday

This is our first working day. After inspection of the operation theatres Cees, Gert, Floris and I go to the polyclinic to see the patients. The ladies stay in the operation theatres to prepare everything. On arrival hundreds of people are waiting, so there is much work to be done. After a chaotic start we later find a reasonable rhythm. After having seen scores of patients for operations we can do with lunch: real Dutch pancakes, which see us

through the rest of the afternoon. We see a special cases such as: epispadias, Tessier cleft, facial neurofibromatosis, but particularly many burn contractures and keloids.

Child with a serious burn contracture on right arm

Unfortunately we cannot help everyone, often because the problems are related to a different specialism, but also because of local limitations. After a long, intensive day we made a good start filling our operation schemes. Tired we evaluate this day with a cold coke on our courtyard.

After supper we enjoy a game despite a new power cut.

Tuesday

It's time to operate! The moment of truth has come. Fortunately we are at full strength after breakfast with local donuts (Cincin). It takes some time to find our rhythm and as we foresaw unexpected things soon happened: patients who do not come and patients who were not on our list but who are here. This made the first day a long day, partly because dr. Spronk meanwhile had to see a few patients in the polyclinic. Yet we can conclude that we all worked well this first day, although we preferred to stop earlier. After some leisure time, it's lights

out at ten.



Wednesday

Remarkably, the second day walking to the operation theatres at eight feels quite normal. You won't develop routine quickly, because what you have to do is too complex and breakfast with lukewarm fries is out of the ordinary. After seeing patients on the ward we start working. We try to work fast, because a delegation of the Embassy in Abuja will visit us. During lunch we have a talk, but not too long, because we have serious matter to attend to in the afternoon. Dr. Spronk and I see a patient with extensive burn contractures in her in her groin. Dr. de Graaf also has a challenge seeing a patient with a very extensive neurofibromatosis in the face. In case we didn't know: we find ourselves in a totally different world with a different and more serious pathology. During the last sunrays Annet and I go running, have dinner, do the administration, write my experiences of the last two days and go to sleep.



Thursday

Today we face the greater challenges which we postponed the first days to get the right feel. Today's focus will be on the correction of hypospadias. First I change some bandages and dismiss some patients. Then I join dr. Spronk who is operating.



After a quite normal morning and a delicious lunch with yams we see a boy with burns that scarred chin and breast. Especially for dr. Scheepstra this is a challenge, because intubation is only possible after doing a release of the scar tissue in the neck. After the release the intubation was still extremely difficult, but fortunately the patient could be respirationed well with a larynx mask. The rest of the procedure and release were sensational and the result was stunning. For me this was the most extraordinary experience, without doing injustice to other patients.

Contracture before and after operation



arch 2016

Friday

Today there is little to tell. During the night I fell ill, like other colleagues: a gastrointestinal illness with fever, so I was unable to leave the bed. Most of us tried to work, but in the course of the day all team members had fallen ill, which meant we had to skip some operations.

Saturday

The brave among us rise early to operate at least one patient of today's programme, but this is hard. The rest of the can be described in two words: gastrointestinal disaster. Later that day Annet and I walk to the river. That's all the energy we use that day.

Sunday

Everybody suffered from the gastrointestinal problems. Meanwhile some recover, but nobody is really fit. The 'fittest' go to Mangu accompanied by dr. de Graaf for a walk through the centre (where unfortunately all shops are closed) and a drink at the Green Lantern Hotel. Nobody was interested to join the many locals watching English soccer on TV. When nature called again we returned to our guesthouse.



Guesthouse old and new

Monday

Back to work and almost recovered again! After visiting the ward and some bandage changes (where I only see patients, who recover well, including the patient with severe skin transplantations in the groin) I go to the operation theatre. Around seven we are in the guesthouse again only to conclude that we worked as if nothing had happened. Just be brave, with sometimes an extra break or sanitary break. The macaroni with Dutch influences was the first supper in days that everybody enjoyed without nasty consequences.

Tuesday

After a disappointing night and a small setback as far as our health is concerned most of us decide to start with antibiotics. Whether this helps or whether it is our own body that overcame our illness we will never know, but we all feel 100% later that day. That morning I do many changes of bandages and help with the restauration of a thumb contracture. During lunch everybody enjoys the food, especially the fresh baked bread by Fibi. Then we did another two operations. As they were complicated operations we arrived at the guesthouse just before dark. Everybody is fit and supper is delicious. Before going to bed we play a game of cards.

Wednesday

Before the alarm clock rings I'm awake, so I can shave my beard off and to administrative tasks. Two extra operations have been scheduled for today, so we'll have to work hard. But first: breakfast! After a visit to the ward for photos with patients I go to the ward room to change bandages until lunch time.



After lunch I assist in the operation theatre until six. We did one extra patient. Tomorrow we'll undoubtedly have new challenges! Before supper Annet, Floris and I go to the internet pub in Mangu, where I find hundreds of messages. The tickets that I wanted to buy online are unfortunately not available. Annet and I run back to arrive just before the dark. After supper I do some studying as I have to sit a NVPC-exam. Life goes on...

Thursday

Our last day to operate with plenty of work to do. After my usual morning round of changing bandages I arrive early in the operation theatres. With Floris and Cees I do the operations, partly on my own as Cees has to attend the ceremony for the official opening of our guesthouse.



Official opening new guesthouse

In the afternoon we round off our programme and arrive at five at the guesthouse, where we enjoy a reasonably cold beer together with dr. Luka and dr. Patience. I also find some time to study.

Friday

The last operations are done by Cees. Together with Floris, Rolien, Ingrid and Geesje I visits the wards and change the bandages. Nearly all the wounds heal well so we go to lunch good humoured. After lunch we go to the local market, where we attract the attention with our white faces.



Who watches who.....

After our visit to the market I do the administration and write my column. In total we operated 82 patients despite our illness. More importantly, nearly all our patients have recovered well after their operation. The first guests arrive for dinner with the local staff, but before we join them Annet and I go running. After a delicious dinner with many words of gratitude Kefas and other locals take leave of the local staff.



Saturday (homeward bound)

We rise early, but leaving early is thwarted by 'Sanitation Day, a day on which the roads are repaired by filling potholes with rubbish, so we cannot leave before nine. We have to buy fuel, which is quite difficult because of the queues. Fortunately one of our drivers is recognized as coach of the local soccer team for women and is given priority.

Nevertheless we drive one hour later than expected. After a long and hot trip by car which takes six hours, we arrive in Abuja. Because of the delays we have no

time to go to the 'souvenir village', but fortunately we find some time for dinner at 'Mr. Bigs', the Nigerian KFC. Within half an hour we arrive at the airport, almost six hours before take-off. We pass the check-in and Customs quickly which means that we have to spend many hours on the airport. After playing cards, reading, chatting, and some shopping in a very expensive tax-free shop we can board. After our meal everybody falls asleep. When we arrive in Frankfurt it is time for coffee and wifi (for some the first time in two weeks). Annet, Geesje and I go to the tax-free shops and then we are on our way to Schiphol, where we are met by our loved-ones. We take leave, knowing we will soon see each other at Gert's house in Almere for an evaluation.

Patrick Ferdinandus, March 2016

