



## Just another case of Corona, perspective from a Malawian doctor, Dr Isaac Yiwombe

It was business as usual. It was my turn to see a patient. After having given myself a few words of encouragement about how awesome a doctor I was, I quickly got up from my seat and grabbed the patient's file. One would think that after about two years of working as a doctor I would have gotten used to the title. I wasn't. Every now and then I would look into the bathroom mirror, gaze upon the smug grinning face staring back, recall the horrors of medical school, and then chuckle under my breath wondering "Now how on Earth did you to pull that off?"

I walked into that consultation room with a light smile on my face, I can't be showing too much happiness to see someone in the hospital. This may very well not be their idea of a day well spent. In normal circumstances, this was just another patient with a regular illness. She was a Chinese lady with a Malawian interpreter by her side, and you could tell by her eyes that she was also smiling underneath her mask. This was early January this year (2020), so naturally I had a few questions going through my mind. Quite a few. I suppose she realised I was anxious because she broke the silence with a laugh and said "I don't have corona".

Contrary to popular belief, people are still suffering from other conditions apart from the Coronavirus disease. People are still getting Malaria, asthma and fever from other illnesses. We can never know for sure until we do the necessary tests for Covid-19. How then do we do we do the tests if the test kits are in limited supply and only special institutions are doing them? And which people do we do the tests on, considering that a substantial percentage of people with Covid-19 do not have any symptoms - and yet they tend to be more infectious? These are but a few of the questions our Nation is currently facing. Questions to which, like most parts of the world, the Nation does not have answers to; answers we are not even sure if we are prepared for as a Nation.

I had boarded a bus about two weeks ago, and only after I had threatened the bus conductor that I was part of the Covid-19 response team did he stop cramming more people into the bus, completely ignoring rules on social distance in public transportation. What is more, the passengers were encouraging it! With a scared look on his face, he then started explaining the company's financial predicament and about how sorry he was. I am certain that this bus company is not the only one ignoring the rules.

Perhaps what he was doing is wrong, but he is good example of what the situation is like for this country. As much as we do not want the spread of the virus to get out of hand, the sad reality is that the majority of the population cannot afford to strictly adhere to measures put in place. People are expected to stay off the streets even though that is where they find a means of survival on a daily basis. Needless to say, declaration of the lockdown was only met with widespread opposition.

We sincerely hope yourselves and your loved ones have been safe and continue to be so as we move forward during the pandemic. Our students in Malawi are currently at home. Schools and universities are closed. Malawi was one of the last African countries to confirm a Covid-19 case. In recent days cases have rapidly escalated. Our graduates have been directly involved in the Covid-19 response, with many taking active roles on the taskforce and appearing on local media to share information. Malawi is not currently in a lockdown, but this was considered. We have been able to successfully run an emergency crowdfunding campaign to supply our graduate health workers with PPE kits. Thank you so much to everyone who donated! There are so many stories to share from this appeal that we are creating a separate report so none of these stories are missed! In amongst the uncertainty we have shown resilience and responded to the challenges faced by health workers globally. At a time when health workers are being increasingly recognized as essential against death and disease, we remain committed more than ever to ensuring the next generation of health workers successfully graduate. We hope you will join us on June 21<sup>st</sup> for our virtual quiz (more details on page 4) and will save the date for the return of more normal times for our annual Christmas concert on 5<sup>th</sup> December in London. To everyone who has supported us during this period, thank you for your loyalty and support. It really has been so heartening to know that we're in this together.

Tamsin

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## Hurst Essay 2020

This is the 9<sup>th</sup> year of the Hurst Essay Competition. This is open to all of our sponsored students & is an opportunity for students to win a monetary prize as well as receive feedback on their academic writing. In previous years entries have been submitted to academic journals and have been published.

This year we introduced more categories of entries to give more students an opportunity to win a monetary prize. The title of the 2020 Hurst essay competition for all categories was: *"Discuss the medical, social and economic consequences of an epidemic in Malawi."* Thank you to the markers Richard Banks, Tony Williams, Cathy Madden and Helen Humphries for their input. Congratulations to the winners! We're looking forward to the 2021 competition already!

**MBBS winners:** 1st place - James Botha; 2nd place - Takondwa Namalima; 3rd place - Martins Simao; Highly Commended - Chimwemwe Banda

**Physiotherapy and Pharmacy winners:** 1st place – Daniel Adam; 2nd place – Hannah Mgode; 3rd place (joint) – Matthews Mlongoti and Rose Joseph; Highly Commended – Moses White.

**Nursing and Clinical Officers:** 1st place – Chester Mtawali; 2nd place (joint) – Gift Gama and Gift Mvula; 3rd place (joint) Eden Mwenitete and Aubery Milinda; Highly Commended – Yohane Nyirenda and Kondwani Piasi.



Happy using his PPE kit in Mzuzu, northern Malawi.

## Emergency PPE Appeal

Following gift aid we can confirm our Emergency PPE Appeal raised £12,437.38! This is the largest amount ever raised in a single appeal in our history! We are so grateful for everyone's help and support in making this possible. With this money we produced a PPE kit for all our graduate health workers in Malawi to use during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please read our separate PPE report to read the stories and messages from our graduates. The report can be accessed from our website.

## Chloe's Sponsored Run



Chloe and Jennie (mum) on their sponsored run

A few weeks ago we received an email from Chloe, aged 9, who did a 7km sponsored run in 42 minutes and 10 seconds raising £147.50! An amazing achievement! A big well done and thank you Chloe! One of our trustees said *"That's 6km more than I could run!"*

If you would like to complete a sponsored event, let us know and we'll send you our information leaflet: [info@medictomedic.org.uk](mailto:info@medictomedic.org.uk)

## Chitenje Scrubs

African Chitenje is a brightly coloured patterned garment. They are often worn by women, wrapped around the chest or waist, over the head as a headscarf, or as a baby sling. They can also be tailored into clothing.

In 2018 we had the idea of creating chitenje scrub tops to raise money and promote ourselves to the medical community. By chance, Portia, one of our physiotherapy graduates asked if she could make items for our fundraising.



Portia modelling one of the chitenje scrub tops.

Our chitenje scrubs are currently a pilot and we have a limited supply remaining. We will consider commissioning more to help us with fundraising. Are you a health worker or a student and would like to brighten up your uniform with a chitenje scrub top? Or perhaps you know an emergency department that would like to invest in *"funky shirt Friday"*? Get in touch with us for orders!

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**Perspective from a Malawian Doctor**

In addition, the already overwhelmed health system is anything but ready to handle the pandemic. The public health sector has barely added any more infrastructure from the time the country got independence till now. The same tertiary hospitals built for a population of less than 5 million are supposed to cater for 18 million people! It is also rather unfortunate that it takes an international health emergency for the government to finally recruit health care workers who have been wrestling with the government for jobs for years. Having finally won the battle, the healthcare workers now have to appeal to the government's better nature for personal protective equipment and an increased risk allowance!

Everyone is scared. There is currently so much uncertainty in the world. And it seems to be the right time to start pointing fingers at anything we can find; from greedy politicians to selfish doctors on strike, from heartless nurses to unruly vendors, and of course, from telecommunications towers to evil geniuses in a Chinese lab. Perhaps no one has absolute knowledge on this matter.

The fact of the matter is, people are really getting sick and many are dying. So many things beyond our control. The widespread sense of hopelessness is evident. The government does not have all the solutions. Whether that is due to misguided priorities or not, we may not know. Nonetheless, something surely has to be done, and I am the right person to do it. So are you. We all have a part to play: Whether it's washing our hands frequently with soap, or following social distancing rules in a bus or wearing a mask in a consultation room or even just staying at home reading some article, by some doctor in Malawi, on a Medic to Medic forum. We may not know how the story ends, but we can do our best to make sure it ends well.

On that same note of stories ending, in case you're still wondering how I survived the case of Corona in my consultation room, the Chinese lady did not have Coronavirus. She had malaria. You can breathe now.



**Christmas Concert**

Thank you to everyone who came to our Christmas carol concert in December. Big shout out and thank you to Danielle Solomon for organising such a fantastic event raising £923.35!

Save the date for the 2020 concert planned for 5<sup>th</sup> December in London. Further details will be posted on our website nearer the time.

**Recycling Trash for Charity Cash**

Over recent months we have been promoting our recycling programmes that we have joined at Terracycle.

A massive thank you to Noah Brown (pictured) who set up a recycling scheme for crisp packets, pens and bread bags at the Beacon School in Amersham. Noah and his family have been very supportive of Medic to Medic through this scheme and we're excited to be working with them!



More thanks go to Bryony at Salisbury District Hospital for setting up recycling on the hospital wards and Juniper Hill School in Flackwell Heath, Buckinghamshire. Our recycling champions are helping us raise vital funds as well as helping us be environmentally conscious. If you would like to set up a recycling scheme in your school or local area and help support us with our fundraising please get in touch: [info@medictomedic.org.uk](mailto:info@medictomedic.org.uk)

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Simply enter the barcode number or ISBN of your product and hit 'Get Value'. If we can, we will make you an offer and you choose how you get paid.



**2 Pack It**

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**3 Send It**

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**4 Get Cash**

Sit back and enjoy quick and secure payment direct to your bank account, PayPal account or preferred charity.





Had a clear out during lockdown? Do you have unwanted books, DVDs, CDs & video games? Help raise vital funds for Medic to Medic by using Ziffit. Download the free app to scan in your items and arrange free collection. They collect fiction and non fiction books, children's books, medical textbooks and music books. Donate the proceeds to Medic to Medic. We can send you our bank details if you would like for us to receive the funds directly.  
Email: [info@medictomedic.org.uk](mailto:info@medictomedic.org.uk).

We will also soon be registered on Vintage Giving as well!





Email: [info@medictomedic.org.uk](mailto:info@medictomedic.org.uk)

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Medic to Medic



Medic to Medic



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[www.medictomedic.org.uk](http://www.medictomedic.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 1149904

Medic to Medic was founded in 2007 to address the problems of training and retaining medical students in some of the world's poorest countries.

For our first country, we chose Malawi. Like so many sub-Saharan countries, Malawi is desperately short of doctors. It has just two doctors per 100 000 people. The UK has over 230 per 100 000.

Medic to Medic helps by supporting poor but bright students through university, who might otherwise drop out. We cover their tuition fees and give them allowances for equipment and books. We link them to individuals in the UK, who provide them with personal support. We help them after graduation until they can support themselves and work as much needed doctors locally.

Our scheme to support medical students has been so successful that we now also support physiotherapists, pharmacists, nurse/midwives, optometrists, mental health workers and clinical officers in Malawi.

Most of our donors give just £5—20 per month. If you feel you can support a student, please visit [www.medictomedic.org.uk](http://www.medictomedic.org.uk) to set up a direct debit online.

You will be linked with an individual student and receive regular updates from them on their progress. You are welcome to enter into email correspondence with them and many of our students find this very motivating. Please note that although you will be allocated a particular student, our donations are pooled so that no one student is disadvantaged if a donor needs to withdraw.

For more information, please contact us (details opposite).

## Future Fundraising

### Save the Date

Join us for our annual concert of Christmas carols and festive favourites on the **5<sup>th</sup> December** at St. Mary's Church Paddington Green, London. All proceeds raising money for Medic to Medic. Keep an eye out on our website for further details from November.

### Virtual Quiz

**21<sup>st</sup> June.** Take part with your household. £4 entry. Go to [www.virtualquizevents.com](http://www.virtualquizevents.com) → Create an account → register to enter the "Medic to Medic" Quiz → Spread the word → Attend on the 21<sup>st</sup> June → Monetary prizes for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places respectively!



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