



I'm writing to you from our Blantyre Medic to Medic office, where I have been for the last 3 months. It is a relief to be back in Malawi after Covid had delayed many of our plans. We are making good progress, although there are always the unexpected and expected delays. *"Malawi goes at her own pace"* has become my favourite phrase and is one I've repeated to myself several times. A particular low point was where the power was off for 28 hours; hungry, with all batteries drained and sitting in the dark, I was getting a bit fed up of repeated earth hours, but fortunately at this lowest point the power returned and I could catch up on some much needed admin. Perhaps the universe felt I needed a break or perhaps it wanted me to experience the challenges many of our students face regularly. These last few weeks have given us an opportunity to meet more students and lay the

foundations for new partnerships at new colleges and universities. The need in Malawi is acute and overwhelming. There is an ongoing need to support students everywhere. Educational opportunities should not be a privilege for those that can afford it, but unfortunately this is the reality for so many. The challenges faced by many students remain a constant source of inspiration. Just when I think I've heard everything, a new story will be narrated and I am left in awe once again. We do what we can, but with more support, we could do so much more. Thank you to our community of pledgers who have supported our Big Give Christmas Challenge. This is the second year we've taken part in this online campaign! Please consider donating during 30th November – 6th December (link opposite) – your donation will be doubled enabling us to increase our impact to where it's needed most! We hope we're the first to wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Thank you for your continuous support – it really does mean so much.

Tamsin

Medic to Medic Big Give Christmas Challenge

One donation twice the impact

<https://donate.thebiggive.org.uk/campaign/a056900001wWzS7AAK>

Words can never describe how grateful we are for active fundraisers who contribute richly (metaphorically & physically) by participating in personal challenges! Notable thanks go to **Preetham Boddana** and **Chloe Charles** who raised £2407.50 and £781 respectively, by running the London marathon. Are you looking for new year's resolutions? What about undertaking a personal fundraising challenge?



"I no longer worry about the future of my education. I know that I just have to work hard on my end and then everything will be alright. **I will soon finish** and be able to work and help other people. You came in my life and **acted like dew in a desert land. I can dream again,** Thank you."



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Hearing impairment in Malawi – a factor in the vicious cycle of Poverty

80% of the global hearing impairment occurs in low and middle income countries. There are limited studies to estimate the prevalence of hearing loss in Malawi, but available figures suggest that over 15% of the adult population and 11.5% of the paediatric population are affected by hearing loss. This compares to the WHO estimated global average of 6.1%.

In Malawi the most common causes of hearing loss are chronic suppurative otitis media, malaria and overdosing of ototoxic anti-malarials such as quinine, meningitis and noise damage. A 2017 study showed almost a half of children with hearing impairment had a perforated ear drum, often resulting from treatable otitis media. The majority (73%) of children with bilateral hearing impairment had conductive hearing loss, and again were related to preventable or treatable conditions. The remaining cases were due to sensorineural causes, and could be treated through effective interventions such as hearing aids or surgery.

Hearing impairment has grave consequences for many, resulting in developmental delay, educational disadvantage and reduced employment opportunities. These all then further contribute to the impoverishment of the next generation.

There is a critical shortage of healthcare workers in every area of medicine in Malawi, and audiology is no exception. With a population of 19 million people, there are just 3 audiologists in the entire country, equating to 1 audiologist per 5.8 million; the UK, has 1 audiologist per 10,000. The first audiology clinic was set up in 2013 in Lilongwe, and three years later, a second clinic in the south of the country. These were set up by foreign aid and are now run by local Audiologists who were sponsored through their training. There remains a critical need for more services.

Through a collaboration with Otocare in north west London, we are supporting a trainee audiologist. The course is a 4 year degree programme with approximately 10 students in each year. Graduates are required to undertake an internship at the central hospitals and will be actively involved in local capacity building for hearing loss services. The programme is always in need of equipment such as hearing aids, otoscopes, audiometers and tympanometers. If you may be able to help, please get in touch: info@medictomedic.org.uk

Melissa Brittle



Fletcher, director of the audiology degree programme at the African Bible College in Lilongwe.

Zikomo to our Runners!

Thank you to our vitality runners: Fanuel, Merai, Andy and Nikhil & friends at Barts football club who raised over £1170 between them!

“Why”? I asked myself this at the eleventh mile of my running in The Vitality Big Half 2021, a half marathon in London that follows a stunning 13.1-mile closed-road course, starting by Tower Bridge and finishing at Cutty Sark in Greenwich.

It was at the eleventh mile that the full impact of what I had signed up for hit me heavy – my feet burning, shins and ankles radiating excruciating pain, a headache due to dehydration, and hamstrings crumping. At that point, an overwhelming thought of quitting occurred to my mind.

I asked myself, “Why am I suffering? Why am I out here?” Then I recalled that the “why” was much bigger than my suffering – I was running to fundraise for Medic To Medic. This motivated me to continue running and shut down that internal voice of quitting until I crossed the finish line at 13.1 miles in 2 hours, 20 minutes and 59 seconds.”

Fanuel Bickton



"Honestly speaking, school has been a very beneficial and fruitful experience. At times it made very emotional, sad, angry, demotivated, and some good days invincible. It's a long journey I just have to admit. But school has shaped me to be mature man, to be able to handle my emotions amidst pressure."



Above: Mzuzu Graduate Dinner. An opportunity for feedback from the alumni and discussions about graduate involvement.



Above: Innocent nursing graduate providing mentorship support to nursing student Peter.

"Am happy for this because without you I was nothing. Am living and learning happily because am sure that my goal to be a clinician will be achieved."

The need in Malawi is constant. In conversation with the Dean of Students, Kenneth Gama at the Malawi College of Health Sciences:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBe9M-L_k&s

Have a listen to some of the challenges facing students here.

Snippet from a student update

"It was a pleasure to meet a good doctor to me who used every opportunity to teach and let me demonstrate till it was done perfectly. Henry Mwakalinga at Rumphi district was not just a doctor but a humble doctor who was trying all he could to make me a good clinician." Henry is a Medic to Medic graduate. Neither knew they had Medic to Medic in common!

Memorable Encounters

One of my most memorable patient encounters was in the psychiatry rotation at Zomba Mental hospital. The patient was a known epileptic and with poor drug adherence. She was brought in by the police who had rescued her from mob justice after she had killed a person at the river in her home village. At first I was surprised why they had brought her here when she was supposed to be in custody, but when I learnt more of her story, I understood that she was at the right place.

"I was surprised the police brought me here and people from my village accusing me of killing a person. From what I remember, I was fighting with a very angry animal at the river which wanted to kill me and in defense I hit it with a wood and smashed its head on a stone and it died right there...." She narrated as I clerked her.

From the history I got, she was an epileptic patient who had stopped medication because she believed that she was bewitched and she could only be cured with traditional medicine. Before she starts a seizure, she feels a burning sensation in her abdomen and then she falls to the ground and sees animals (normally people) surrounding her. So she starts fighting with the animals and most of the times they run away.

During this episode of the seizure, she fell to the ground and she later on realized that she was at the river where there was an animal which wanted to kill her and she killed the animal instead. Later on she realized that people were running after her carrying sticks and pangas saying that she had killed a person and she also should be killed.

Lucky enough the police arrived at the scene in good time, she was rescued and brought to hospital. Apparently she had postictal / interictal psychotic episode which may have been caused by poorly managed epilepsy.

From this case I was able to appreciate the risks which mental health patients have from people, to people and to themselves and how these affect the management plans for such patients. I also got to understand how the biopsychosocial approach is crucial in diagnosing and managing mental health problems.

Ketrina Gama



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For comments, questions and errata regarding this newsletter, please contact the editor at the email address above. Every effort has been made to credit contributors to this newsletter. Where omissions have occurred, please advise and they will be rectified at the earliest possible opportunity.



Medic to Medic



Medic to Medic



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tamsinlillie

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 medical school, 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, nurses, 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 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

Come and join us on the 12th December between 2-4pm where our Medic to Medic choir will be carol singing for your donations at Paddington station.



Shopping online? Register with easyfundraising.co.uk and choose Medic to Medic as your supported charity. For every purchase you make online, the retailer will give a small donation to us at no extra cost to you!



Pledjar..

Donate using Pledjar

The free app that uses the latest technology to round up your total daily donations to a charity.



Nominate Medic to Medic to win £1000 in unrestricted funds up to 6th December through Ecclesiastical. All you need is our charity number 1149904. Charity type "Education and Skills".

<https://www.movementforgood.com/12days/#nominateACharity>

