



## News from Dr. Elma Jocson Methodist Missionary to Liberia

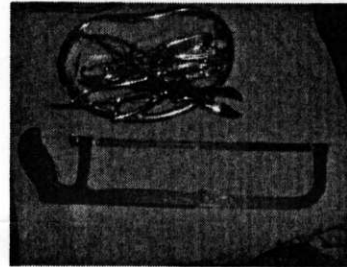
Doctors make the worst patients. And I am no exception. I thought of myself as being quick and decisive. But I was wrong. My insides are hurting, my muscles are sore and I'm feeling really tired. At the beginning, I had dismissed these as just stress-related. But the pain is real and persistent. You think I would go straight to the lab for some tests? I self medicated with antibiotic. When it wasn't working, I was convinced I should go for a malaria test. I almost went. But I was afraid to find out if I have malaria-not when I'm taking prophylaxis tablets. I don't want to be proven wrong.

It has always been busy here. May passed by so quickly and significantly. My sister came for a short visit, basically to bring our mother back to the Philippines. Thankfully, my good friend visited at a very opportune time. As always, babies are steadily being delivered, not so many sets of twins as March though. There also had been a series of bereavements. In one funeral service, it took me awhile to adjust to the different way of going about the service. There was a person acting like she is off her senses, talking about the dead at the top of her voice. True or made up stories - people were laughing. And at the same time there's blaring music and dancing. What went on in that funeral is a bit confusing to me.

During the course of all these comings and goings, there were 59 operated cases performed. Too many! As was the situation in Nepal, we do what we can when we feel confident to do it (or we feel we can help). A 3-day-old boy was born with his urinary bladder exposed in his abdominal wall. Risk over benefit, with the parents' consent we went ahead. Successful operation, dead patient! Makes the surgeon very weak.

You know I'm also the so-so bone doctor here. The usual practice here is to bring the closed fractures (broken bones without open wound) to the bush doctor. If there's a wound the patient come to our hospital and gets several doses of antibiotic after debridemen (removing dirt and dead tissues), then will go home against our advice to go to the bush. In times when the bush doctor fails, Dr. Elma returns. Ta-dah.

Amputation time...I'm not kidding. You can smell them a mile away! Last December I brought with me two pieces of (medical) gigli saw wires for amputation. Both have been broken since April. I said no more amputation until I get my new wires. That can't be because there's sure to be one or two (surgeries) every month. I could have insisted I'd only use gigli wire - it's easier and cleaner to use. I finish much quicker with less strength required. But we had to use what is available.



Patient has gone home

I thought it's a wood saw but John Veazey, (my e-musing helper) identified it as a common hacksaw, used to cut metal bolts, tubing etc. Among surgeons, we sort of joke about the Orthopedic surgeons' work as like carpentry. Naturally, I didn't want to actually be a 'carpenter-surgeon', but there's no escaping it. First the Black & Decker drill, now a hacksaw! What's next????

Back to the malaria saga! I finally went to the lab, I tested negative and was disappointed. What is wrong??? After consulting a Liberian MD, I was advised to start treatment anyway. He says its sub clinical malaria. The tablet taste awful and it's giving me gastritis!! I'm being a baby - a baby with no mother, huhuhu. I'll get over this, and myself, will be wiser. Now I can really suffer with my patients! I am confident that you pray for us. God bless you more!

Sent from Dok Elma's iPod  
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