

October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Greetings,

We are now nearing the end of our third month here in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo. It has been a very productive start here as we built on the work started by Jen Parson, Mary Le, Mike Grills, Chris Carpenter and Lisa Dickey in partnering with local providers at the HEAL Africa Hospital to improve the quality of pediatric patient care.

The Congolese staff is highly motivated and we have been helping to direct that energy into improving the quality of medical care delivered at the hospital through better communication with families, verification of pediatric medicine doses, adherence to evidence-based practice and structured rounds. The HEAL Africa staff now understands the importance of involving the parents in the care of sick children. Signs are posted throughout the ward in French and Swahili informing parents that if they are not informed, then we have not delivered quality care. Parents now have come to expect daily updates, and the parents of long term patients have become empowered to speak with the medical team. Though not particularly romantic, these nuts and bolts are essential for the care of critically ill hospitalized patients and we have already noticed a substantial improvement.

We have also continued IPOP's longstanding annual neonatal resuscitation train program. This year, we went outside of HEAL Africa, providing educational seminars at Carmel Hospital and other local health centers. We taught over 50 health care providers who are responsible for an astounding 2000 births per year. As a sign of IPOPs continued presence, we were able to transition the education program such that our original Congolese "students" now teach the program while we serve as evaluators. It's quite rewarding to see and truly reflects IPOPs values of "teaching someone to fish." We have expanded the program, so that now Congolese healthcare providers at HEAL Africa train other maternity wards in Goma. As part of our philosophy, we provide feedback to these new instructors to help them become better teachers. For almost all of our instructors, this is their first opportunity to teach what they have learned and we have found that many are natural leaders whose role as teachers has deepened their knowledge of the material. However, more than that and difficult to quantify, the work has given these healthcare workers a sense of pride in their positions as local experts in neonatal care.



Though we aim for long-term sustainable change, we continue to impact individual lives as well. Our neonatal training was recently put to the test with the delivery at HEAL Africa of healthy triplets. We have helped hundreds of complicated patients with an average inpatient census of 15-20 patients. Their families, because of our constant presence, accept the care we provide and are extremely grateful. In fact, the IPOP team recently received a wonderful gift of three cooked fish from the family of one of our patients who was discharged—an incredible gesture considering how many of our families are resource-limited. So, though we aim to “teach people how to fish” we accept fish that are already caught as well.

We are excited to announce that IPOP has been working hard to make HEAL Africa a recognized nutritional center in Goma. What this means is that HEAL Africa will begin to receive therapeutic milk for severely malnourished children for free as part of a partnership with Unicef and the national nutritional program in the Congo.

We are eagerly looking forward to continuing the work.

Sincerely,

Joshua Bress

