



NURSE'S NOTES

CHARTING ON MY LIFE IN RWANDA

June, 2018

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4th of July

Here in Rwanda the first week of July has two national holidays—July 1st and July 4th. This year since July 1st was a Sunday, the day off fell on Monday. How nice is that for people with real jobs—two days off in the same week?!

But if you're sick and need medical attention, it's not such a nice week. Work at the hospital continues, but with reduced staff and no scheduled electives. I usually go down to make sure all the babies are stable. If not, I see that needed treatments are changed. Then I go home and am on call. So I usually get a half day off. :-)



My Birthday

I had a great birthday this year! Friends and I kayaked over to an island in Lake Kivu for a picnic lunch and swim. On the way there we had no problem keeping the double kayak going straight, but on the way back—oh my! I don't know what we were doing wrong, but we couldn't go straight! We made it back in the end and had some good laughs on the way. :-)



Accident

The evening before my birthday, the head nurse came running into neonatal and asked us to send a nurse to the emergency room. There'd been a big accident. I went, and that was the beginning of a long night.

I've never worked as an emergency room nurse, but have taken classes and helped out in the past with other accidents. This one had the most visible injuries of all the accidents I've been involved with. It was a pickup truck that lost control and rolled. In the back of the truck were 25+ people who were on their way home from burying a loved one. Suddenly, they were all flying through the air and on the way to the hospital themselves!

Some things about working in Rwanda are different than the USA. 1) Our hospital has only 2-3 ambulances, and the accident happened 20 minutes away. To speed things up, the police stopped all oncoming traffic, put injured people in these vehicles, and told the drivers to take them to the nearest hospital. Our parking lot was soon swamped with cars and pickups of various sizes and shapes, bringing us injured people.

2) Our emergency room has only six beds, so mattresses were put on the floor. Even by the end of the night, ICU patients were still on the floor.

3) We don't have spare IV poles, but that night we had a lot of first year nursing students. They became IV poles, holding IV bags and making sure they were running. The students completed charts, as nurses told them what to write, and also did a lot of vital signs.

4) In the USA if a neck or back injury is suspected, the clothes are cut off. In Rwanda the clothes are too valuable to cut off, so one has to figure out how to remove the clothing without moving the neck or back. That's a hard one for me—is a coat really worth the risk of paralysis?

We were so fortunate to have three visiting surgeons here at the time; it could have been a lot worse. But what a blessing to watch people pull together in caring for those who were hurting.



Happy New (Fiscal) Year

The end of the hospital's fiscal year is June 30th. This year there are a lot of decisions needing to be made. A number of years ago the government instituted nursing licenses and gave all nurses a few years to get one. June 30th was the end of that grace period.

So now the hospital administration has to make some tough decisions for the eight nurses who were trained on the job by Dr. Snyder and other missionaries before nursing schools even existed in Rwanda. They're good nurses but have no license. One is the best nurse in the whole hospital at starting an IV. Please pray for wisdom on how to shift these nurses to other roles with hospital finances being very tight, for the eight nurses waiting to hear the decision, and for the departments they're working in. One of those departments is neonatology—my department



Baby of the Month: Baby Bernadette

This baby and I share the same birthday, so when I saw how sick she was, I really wanted her to live. She was septic, not responding to the antibiotics we were giving her. Her platelets were almost completely used up, so if she'd started bleeding, her blood wouldn't clot. The third antibiotic finally worked. (We don't have blood cultures so can't test to see which antibiotic treats the infection. We have to try one after the other until one finally works.) Her liver started getting smaller; her respiratory distress began to decrease.

Baby Bernadette liked to fool us! Even though she was super sick, she'd move around and cry when she got hungry, so everyone thought she wasn't as sick as she really was. But thankfully, now she's just on oxygen. We're praying soon we can get her off that and send her home! Thank you, God, for protecting her and keeping her alive!



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Prayer Requests

- Patience
- God's continued protection for the babies on busy days with less nurses
- Wisdom for hospital leaders



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Praises

- God's Presence even in frustrations
- Friends coming to visit