

INSPECTION FROM BLACK LION HOSPITAL

'It is amazing what little harm doctors do when one considers all the opportunity they have.' Mark Twain

Every health care setting and every health care professional should, in my opinion, be periodically subject to independent inspection in order to assess the quality of care delivered so that the system, and the individual operators, will be improved if deemed necessary. Although a different discussion on itself, regulation of quality control should not defeat its purpose and adversely interfere with delivery itself.

I was unaware of any external quality control in our local hospital in Hawassa, until the week started with an introduction of two surgeons from the Black Lion hospital in Addis Abeba, dubbed aptly as 'the centre of excellence'. Later that week, they left and two other surgeons replaced them. In this short span of time, besides giving lectures and updating surgical techniques, they functioned as inspection on the quality of care delivered by the surgery department.

Whilst we were strangers allowed to share insights, they were revered peers who had actual power to influence the status quo of practise, and managed, in fact, to aid us in our crusade to improve health care. Ye arr! And they did!

For example, in week one, we were told by the most senior local surgeon that patients who were on the program for intestinal surgery, were to be prepared three days prior to surgery with laxatives as well as withheld from eating one day up front. Based on years old evidence, such practise is deemed useless - and implicitly costly in this set up. The senior refused to listen and claimed it national policy. As soon as I saw chance, I had to verify this with the guests of this week, and, being myself, could not withhold myself from doing this in clear presence of this senior surgeon. To my great surprise, they simply retorted with – and I paraphrase - 'Bollocks! There is no evidence for this medieval practise'. Score!

The visiting surgeons will write up a report with critique and recommendations for the local hospital. It gives me great joy to have experienced Ethiopians with a drive to intelligently improve their health care system!



Start of the weekend: a deceased horse left for grabs at the hospital gates. Due to present weather conditions at that time as well as a complete lack of interest to remove the cadaver, it looked ripened for a royal bang and splash.

RELAXATION

The weekend we spend in part with three English students at an Italian-Greek run lodge some 40 clicks south east of Hawassa amidst great flora and fauna as well as very tasty food. Yummie!

