



Back in Country for Neurotrauma 2022

What a delight it was to be in Tanzania again for the first time since 2019! As proud as I am of all the remote training we accomplished during the worst days of the pandemic, there is still nothing quite like being there in person. I was extremely gratified to be back in country this spring to resume our intensive neurotrauma course, encompassing classroom lectures as well as live surgeries. Now that we're all so well versed in virtual meetings, we were even able to add some remote lectures, bringing additional expertise from the West to the lecture hall.

Our team of neurosurgeons from North America and Europe arrived at Muhimbili Orthopaedic Institute in Dar Es Salaam on March 21 to begin our weeklong neurotrauma course. We were honored to have Tanzania's Minister of Health, Umyy A. Mwalimu, join us for the opening ceremony, and then the work began.

Each day of the course, we covered critically important topics in the classroom in the morning, followed by live surgeries in three different operating theaters. The first day, dedicated to the basics, included lectures not only from myself but also from Dr. Fabian Sommer, currently serving as a spine research fellow with my Weill Cornell Medicine team in New York; Dr. François Waterkeyn, our current Global Health Neurosurgery Fellow in Tanzania; and Dr. Halinder Mangat, the medical director of the neurosciences ICU at NewYork-Presbyterian and Weill Cornell Medicine in New York. We were pleased that Dr. Gail Rosseau of George Washington University was able to join us virtually to talk to the gathering about current concepts of global health.

The following days covered neuro-oncology,

pediatrics, cerebrovascular conditions, and research, with highlights including a virtual presentation on vestibular schwannomas from our Weill Cornell Medicine neurosurgery chair, Dr. Philip Stieg, and an exciting live talk from MOI neurosurgery chief Dr. Hamisi Shabani on endoscopic ETV for hydrocephalus. We also enjoyed talks from Dr. Preuss Christian and Dr. Ondra Petr from Austria and Dr. Faheem Sheriff from the United States. Dr. Laura Lohkamp from Canada gave a wonderful presentation on research methodology and literature searches.

Demand for the training course was strong, and we received applications from more than 500 doctors and nurses from 20 countries. We were able to accommodate 350 of them in the venue, and we look forward to training the other 200 soon. We are hoping for a larger venue for our next course, and we were delighted to hear Health Minister Mwalimu say she will do what she can to help us secure that space.

I can't tell you how encouraged I am by the interest in this course, and how grateful I am to the generous donors who make these ongoing, lifesaving courses possible. I am so happy to provide you with this update, with photos and information about this trip.

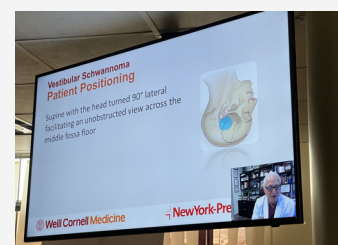
Thank you!

Pictured at left: I was thrilled to deliver my lecture in person to a full house of eager students; Dr. Laurence Lemery moderated the skull base and neuro-oncological session.



Neurotrauma Course Adopts Hybrid Learning

We have been conducting weekly remote sessions with our Tanzanian counterparts for years, so we had a head start in the remote work that took the world by storm in the pandemic. This year it was really fantastic to be able to include talks from remote faculty, including our chairman, Dr. Stieg. If there has been a silver lining in these pandemic years, it's been the widespread adoption of video communication. We were grateful for it during this course especially!





Before We Head Into the Operating Theater

Getting to know the patients is an important first step. Here, I visit the waiting patients and review their charts and scans to confirm all the details and the planning.



In the OR

Alongside local surgeons, we performed a total of 15 surgeries during the week. Many fellows and trainees scrubbed in to assist, or were on hand to observe. At far left, I teach local surgeons the art of microscopic surgery.



Dr. Preuss Christian and Dr. Ondra Petr were able to train local surgeons on procedures to remove a brain tumor as well as an arteriovenous malformation.



The nursing staff is critical to our efforts, so our course includes a track for those who care for patients before and after surgery.



We are very excited to welcome Dr. Anthony Chibuikem Ikwuegbuanyi, our new research fellow, who will spend a year at MOI assisting Dr. Waterkeyn and the local team in collecting data and improving research capability.

The Generosity of Our Commercial Partners

Thanks to a strong collaboration with generous companies like Depuy Synthes, Viseon, Realists, and Medtronic, our team was able to perform MIS “over the top” lumbar decompression as well as a TLIF procedure, generating enthusiasm among local doctors who were excited to learn these new techniques. Attendees had the advantage of using Realists’ RealSpine models shipped from the United States for the course. Those models, in combination with the Viseon tubular camera system, offers one of the best 3D plastic model surgical training experiences available. More than 20 doctors interested in spine surgery were able to participate in the experience of hands-on training using these lifelike models.

