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PAACS Alumni Newsletter

VOL.3

The Good Fight

"Fight the good fight of faith"
– 2 Timothy 6:12

by Rev. Stan Key

When I was a boy there was nothing I loved more than playing army. While my sisters stayed inside having tea parties with their dollies, I was outside pretending to blow things up, shoot the enemy, and save civilization. Any stick was a potential gun, and any clod of dirt a hand grenade. With the help of other boys in the neighborhood, we dug a foxhole in our backyard where we huddled together and decided strategy. Once our plans were made we would leap from the trenches and run forth onto the field of battle to perform heroic deeds of valor and courage. There was no greater honor than "dying" a dramatic death on the field of battle in the fight to save the world.

Psychologists might suggest that boys who play war games like this suffer from some pathological disorder and need therapeutic attention. I beg to differ. The God who created us in his image is "a man of war" (Exodus 15:3). The desire to fight is part of our spiritual DNA. It is a tragic fact that human conflict is usually ugly and destructive. When God is absent, we fight for the wrong reason, in the wrong battles, on the wrong sides, with the wrong weapons. The results are always bad. However, things change dramatically when we invite Christ to be Lord over everything in our lives, even Lord over our conflicts. When Jesus reigns in our hearts, we don't cease to fight; rather, we learn to fight rightly. According to the Bible, there are at least three things a Christian soldier needs to know:

1. **Know your Commander-in-Chief:** knowing him enables us to see clearly the issues that are at stake, the participants in the conflict, and the choice that we are called upon to make. (Joshua 5:13-15)

2. **Know your enemy:** our enemy is both shrewd in his tactics and ingenious in his many disguises (2 Corinthians 11:14)

3. **Know your weapons:** the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:13-18). But our ultimate weapon, our nuclear option, is prayer!

There is a battle going on. The destiny of the world is hanging in the balance. General Jesus has sounded the call to arms. So put away your dollies and tea sets and take up your weapons. You and I are needed at the front!

It is my pleasure to introduce two more of our graduates to the PAACS family in this edition of the PAACS Alumni Newsletter. Dr. Heuric Rakotomalala and Dr. Gerald Ekwen have each taken their PAACS training and returned to their native countries to better the surgical care and share the love of Christ with their fellow countrymen. Join me in praising the Lord for the work both of these men are doing in Cameroon and Madagascar. PAACS graduates are now serving in 18 nations throughout Africa. Please continue to pray for those graduates who are still looking for jobs and for Katie Key who is recovering from a recent stroke. Our God is faithful!

— Thomas C Robey, MD
Editor; trobey@mcw.edu

Making a Difference in Madagascar

— Heuric Rakotomalala, MD

Dr. Heuric Rakotomalala is a PAACS graduate who is currently serving the Lord at Manambaro Lutheran Hospital in Madagascar. He and his wife, Mireille, who is also an internist, have three grown children (Ihoby, Andry and Mirenty) who each are pursuing their education in the United States. Heuric was born in Antsirabe, Madagascar and grew up mostly in Antananarivo, Madagascar. He came to the PAACS general surgery program at Banso Baptist Hospital in Cameroon in 2003 and graduated in July of 2007. He went on to do a pediatric surgery fellowship at BethanyKids at Kijabe Hospital in Kenya where he graduated in 2010.

After graduation, Dr. Rakotomalala worked one year at BethanyKids as a Junior Consultant Pediatric Surgeon. However, in March of 2011, the Lord brought Heuric and his family back to Madagascar when he was appointed to work at Antanimalandy Lutheran Hospital in Mahajanga, Madagascar. In addition to being the pediatric surgeon at the hospital, he was also made the Chief Medical Officer. Dr. Rakotomalala stated, "I decide to come back to my home country because there is a terrible lack of pediatric surgeons in the country. There are only 5 pediatric surgeons for 22 million inhabitants." Since February of 2015, Heuric and his family have been serving at Manambaro Lutheran Hospital in the southeast part of Madagascar where the need for surgeons is "huge".

Heuric is the only certified general and pediatric surgeon in southeastern Madagascar. He is currently the Chief Medical Officer of Manambaro Hospital, which serves nearly 3 million people in that region. The hospital has 61 beds with only one surgeon (Dr. Rakotomalala) and one medical practitioner (Mireille). While he was working in Mahajanga, Heuric trained 3 young physicians to handle certain emergency surgeries and he is similarly training another young doctor at Manambaro Hospital to help assist him in a similar manner.

Dr. Rakotomalala starts each day with hospital devotions followed by surgical rounds and then scheduled surgeries and clinic patients. His administrative duties often stretch into the early evening hours. Heuric's impact on the surrounding region has been tremendous. He and his team have brought high-level pediatric surgical care to this area of the world for the first time. Pediatric surgeries, such



as VP shunts, cleft lip and palate repair, and surgical correction of spina bifida and clubfeet can now be performed at Manambaro Hospital, and patients no longer need to be referred to Antananarivo 1400 km away. Furthermore, many surrounding hospitals in the area now refer their surgical patients to Dr. Rakotomalala sometimes traveling over 500 kilometers to see him. This is what PAACS is all about. Training surgeons to take excellent surgical care and the gospel of Christ to areas of Africa that are sorely lacking in both and thereby changing these regions forever—all for the glory of our Lord Jesus!

Heuric has seen the Lord's hand throughout his entire journey. "God is truly our Provider since the beginning," he states. When asked how PAACS prepared him for the work he is doing today, Heuric responded, "PAACS helped me to live a daily life honoring God. The surgeon attitude learned during my PAACS residency became a routine –performing high quality surgery, handling difficult situations with learned skills and having the Great Healer beside me. PAACS also helped me to share the Gospel with my patients and their caregivers."

Heuric and his wife covet the prayers of the PAACS family for their efficient leadership, witnessing to their coworkers and continued financial assistance for their children's education. Dr. Rakotomalala is committed to training future surgeons at Manambaro Lutheran Hospital or all over Madagascar through PAACS. Please pray for Heuric, his family and the work they are doing unto the Lord in Madagascar – may God provide the help Heuric currently needs and for future surgeons to continue his work someday.

Returning Home in Cameroon

— Gerald Ekwen, MD

Dr. Gerald Ekwen was born in the tiny village of Tiko, Cameroon and continues to better the lives of Cameroonians today through his surgical practice at Baptist Hospital in Mutengene in the same region of Cameroon where he grew up. Gerald joined the PAACS residency program in Ngaoundere, Cameroon in 2009 and later transferred to Mbingo Hospital that same year when the training program at Ngaoundere was closed. He finished his training at Mbingo in 2013.

After graduation, Dr. Ekwen said, "I saw the need to return to my region of birth to serve the Lord." He has been serving at Baptist Hospital for the past 3 years, "putting into practice all the skills and knowledge I learned in PAACS." Gerald went on to say; "I know there are people who would not be alive today if I had not accepted to serve in Mutengene." Baptist Hospital is a 100-bed hospital with 15 surgical beds that are taken care of by Dr. Ekwen and Dr. Henry Ndasi, also a PAACS graduate and orthopedic consultant. With Dr. Ekwen and Dr. Ndasi, Baptist Hospital is growing into a major trauma and orthopedic surgery

center. There are four major hospitals in the surrounding area and five active general surgeons for a population of over 1 million. Due to Dr. Ekwen's presence in Mutengene, patients no longer have to travel the long distance from southwest Cameroon to the PAACS training center in Mbingo for surgical procedures that can now be done in Mutengene. One patient told Dr. Ekwen, "I never knew Mutengene also had "big surgeons". I used to travel to Mbingo but my problem is now solved in Mutengene!"

When asked how PAACS prepared him for his current position, Gerald responded, "PAACS prepared me to be a "Servant Surgeon", following the footsteps of Jesus. I learned it was a privilege to minister to God's people. I learned to show compassion to patients and build a fruitful working relationship with senior and junior colleagues. Academically, PAACS prepared me to face whatever challenging surgical conditions I could encounter. I have also learned to identify my limitations, make safety my priority and know when to stop and refer."

Dr. Ekwen actively shares the gospel with his patients. He believes, "this has had the most impact in their lives." Gerald does a short devotion every Monday with his patients before starting clinic consultations. He also prays with them and gives them gospel tracts to read. He has led many of them to Christ. "This is the greatest part, bringing my



faith into my practice and giving hope even to desperate cancer patients." Gerald credits the Lord for all his success in Mutengene, "The Lord has been faithful, our Jehovah Jireh. He has been providing for us each day, meeting our needs, far beyond our expectation. We give Him the Glory."

Dr. Ekwen's wife, Bertha, is currently working on her MBA and is heavily involved in their local church. They have two sons, Samuel and Daniel. The Ekwen family requests prayer from the PAACS family for balance in their work and family life and church ministry. Please also pray for their kids to know Christ and live for him. Pray that the Lord will raise up ministry partners to support their work in modernizing and upgrading their surgery department. Gerald also wants to further his training in minimally invasive surgery. Lastly, Dr. Ekwen desires to be a part of training future PAACS surgeons at Mutengene and teaching at the local medical school. "I hope to continue to serve the Lord and his people in Mutengene till my hands can no longer hold the scalpel."

Alumni News



Alumni News - seen at the CMDA/CMDE conference in Greece are PAACS graduates: Simplicie Tchoba, MD, Philadelphia Dembele, MD and Jacques Ebhele, MD. All three of these men graduated from the Bongolo Hospital PAACS program in Gabon. Dr. Tchoba continues to serve on staff at Bongolo while Dr. Dembele is serving in Mali and Dr. Ebhele is a staff surgeon at Mbingo Hospital in Cameroon.

MALI
Philadelphi Dembele

GUINEA
Jean Faya Yaradouno

SIERRA LEONE
Aiah Lebbie

LIBERIA
Jerry Brown
Anatole Nzanu

NIGERIA
Chukwudi Okorie

CAMEROON
Jacques Ebhele
Gerald Ekwen
Domain Fuka
Amos Chege Macharia
Degaulle Mifila
Anthony Nesoah
Henry Ndasi
Yali bin Ramazani

GABON
Simplicie Tchoba
Ruffin Loua

DRC
Jean Bataneni
Hubert Kakalo

ANGOLA
Paulo Baltazar

SOUTH AFRICA
Agneta Odera

Please Pray for Our PAACS Graduates



ETHIOPIA
Frehun Ayele
Segni Bekele
Dejene Desalegn
Solomon Endrias
Daniel Gidabo
Tewodros Tamiru
Haileyesus Tesfaye

KENYA
Jack Barasa
Elijah Mwaura Chege
Damaris Mbalu
Ken Muma
Tony Mwenyemali
Kamene Mwanzia
George Ngock
Jack Okumu
Philip Blasto Ooko

TANZANIA
Catherine Mung'ongo
Henry Ine

BURUNDI
Nkeshia Gisita

UGANDA
Martin Situma
Ighohwo Etuh

MALAWI
Arega Leta

MADAGASCAR
Heuric Rakotomalala
Elson Randrianantenaina
Harison Rasamimanana
Roseline Razanamampionona

PAACS
Alumni