

Brian and Jackie Chilvers

Have you ever worked together?

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www.bmsworldmission.org/bjchilvers

Throughout our nursing careers we have both frequently been asked the above question! Mission preparation and language school notwithstanding, the answer was pretty much 'no' until recently. Both September and October have been extremely busy months for Guinebor 2 Hospital, and whilst we both have our areas of expertise, our paths have crossed more often than ever before.

Whilst the greatest number of people coming through Urgences have malaria related symptoms/illness, Brian noticed that treatment for asthma here is limited, and lots of the devices, inhalers and medication that we take for granted in the UK are not available. Those who have asthma will hopefully know that in case of an asthma attack a 'spacer' can be used to give the 'emergency puffs' of the inhaler, and can avoid the need for further intervention. In the past Jackie remembers patients referring to spacers as being "like coke bottles", which gave us the idea to try out a home-made version. - you can see the real thing and our version in the picture. The first patient was a lady around 60 years of age who was quite surprised when Brian presented her with our spacer but was happy that her symptoms were relieved after Brian showed her how to breathe with it.

There is lots of plastic waste around the hospital, village and roadsides, which is a daily reminder of their environmental impact. Whilst we try to minimise our own waste it is good to be able to re-use some of our plastic in a way that is positive and cost effective (free!) for our patients. Looking forward, perhaps we can develop this further so patients can continue to receive this effective treatment.



The month of September was extremely busy for Jackie, as her Chadian colleague was on leave for the month. Jackie was running the vaccination clinic each day, supported by a midwife for translation from Arabic to French. There was a shortage of BCG vaccine, which created extra challenges in terms of communication with parents and extremely busy clinics when supplies resumed. Thankfully Mel had arrived from the UK, and they were able to work together with the malnourished children – we had more than double the number of malnourished children hospitalised in September compared to August and the highest ever amount through outpatients. It was a steep learning curve, and Jackie was relieved to be able to seek Brian's help with babies who she was worried about.

The best thing about this busy time without her regular colleague was the relationships that Jackie has been able to form with the mums, who are happy to make jokes with her, and always make an effort to greet her, despite not yet having much shared language.

It was strange that after years of Brian being late home due to the nature of his work, he was frequently calling Jackie or seeking her out, helping clear up or prepare the peanut paste at the end of the day. In return Jackie is recently to be found helping Brian in Urgences at the end of the day with application of plaster casts to broken limbs. One particular day we worked closely together to care for a baby who arrived in Urgences with severe burns – it was a distressing situation but it was good to be able to look at her needs and plan the care together.

Jackie has supported Mel and Tom Spears with the malnutrition training they have been able to start delivering, while Brian is using his role in Urgences to ensure that all the processes for detecting these children have been followed and hopefully to encourage his colleagues to do likewise once the training has been completed. Again we have found ourselves having a common goal and are often working together to ensure children with malnutrition are detected and receive the correct care.

One of the biggest challenges is to understand that our worldview is always different to that of our patients and even our Chadian colleagues – for example we are often so upset and frustrated when children, young people and adults die from something we view as preventable by seeking help earlier or having better resources. We comment that “if this was to happen in the UK it would be front page news” or wonder “Why does no one tell the parents that the child looks extremely small and under-developed?” There is no simple answer to these questions, but our growing relationships with colleagues help us understand a little more about their lived experiences and culture.

Thank you for your prayers and support which we value so much.

We have both succumbed to gastric bugs and colds over the last few weeks, which is frustrating as well as draining. Please pray for good health. Please pray for lots of energy to get through each busy day, and for wisdom and resilience in the difficult and distressing situations. We are both recommencing a little language study this week - Brian is looking to continue improving his french whilst Jackie is starting Arabic! - Please pray that these lessons will be encouraging and effective.

We are thankful that we are settling into a small church nearby which is very friendly, and we would like to be more involved with if possible.

So, the answer to the question we started with - "Have you ever worked together?"- is now a resounding yes! Before we arrived we struggled to imagine this – but despite each of us having a very different skillset, we are happy that we are now able to complement each other in our work each day!

If you would like to support Brian and Jackie Chilvers by prayer and committed regular giving, visit bmsworldmission.org/partners or call 01235 517617 for a 24:7 Partners leaflet.



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