

ON CALL

Getting to the Roots

Dental Care That
Transforms Lives

INSIDE: EL SALVADOR | ETHIOPIA | PAPUA NEW GUINEA

INSIDE

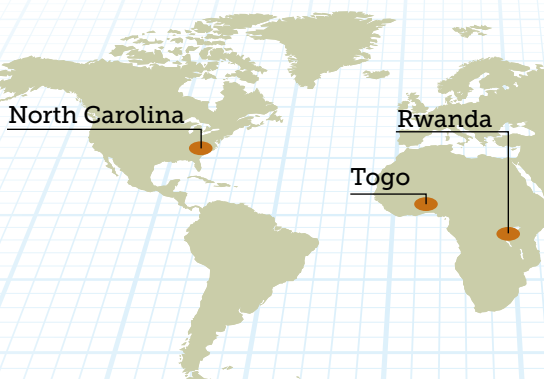
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WHERE IS GOD CALLING YOU?
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COVER PHOTO: Our first dental Specialty Team visited schools and held mobile clinics in rural communities in El Salvador. Oral hygiene education is a first step in preventing tooth decay and abscesses, as well as more serious health issues.



WORLD MEDICAL MISSION®
A MINISTRY OF SAMARITAN'S PURSE®

World Medical Mission assists evangelical mission hospitals and clinics by sending Christian medical professionals as volunteers, and by providing equipment, supplies, and other resources that help them treat patients in the Name of the Great Physician.

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Dear Friend,

As the Great Physician, the Lord Jesus Christ often healed people of their physical maladies before He addressed their ultimate need for spiritual transformation. Whatever their station in life—like the man paralyzed for 38 years or the woman with the issue of blood—Jesus treated them with dignity and compassion. If they couldn't come to Him for help, He met them where they were. Those one-on-one encounters with the Savior changed them forever.

In this edition of *On Call*, you will meet some of our World Medical Mission volunteers and staff who have traveled to distant lands to bring Christ near to the hearts of broken people. A retired Indiana pediatrician rejoices with an Ethiopian father whose 2-year-old daughter received a last-minute miracle. God uses the teaching skills of an Ohio nurse to help save the life of a stroke patient in Guatemala. And a Post-Resident surgeon encourages a mortally wounded man to embrace the gift of God's grace in Papua New Guinea.

Our Specialty Teams are also making inroads with the Gospel as they travel to medically underserved parts of the world to perform surgeries and conduct advanced training. Beginning in the fall of 2024, this program has branched out into the field of dentistry, and we have now sent two groups to serve communities in El Salvador. We will be sending an orthopedic team to Nigeria and a dental team to Honduras later this year. Please contact us for additional volunteer opportunities because there are ongoing needs for medical specialists in all of our partner hospitals.

"If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:11). God bless you.

Sincerely,

Franklin Graham
President, Samaritan's Purse

Kemp Laidley, a physical therapist, helps a young woman in Malawi regain the use of her arm following orthopedic surgery at Nkhoma Mission Hospital.



Notes *from Around the World*

Insights from some of the medical personnel who serve in mission hospitals in more than 20 countries through World Medical Mission.



North Carolina, USA

On staff with World Medical Mission for over 10 years, Barbara Rash serves on our Lab Support Team.

Reflecting on her favorite aspect of the job, Barbara said: “It’s the people we serve with. The relationships you form, especially during service, become like family. You depend on each other because you’re in really hard places, facing life and death together. You have to trust each other completely, and that trust turns into a bond, like a well-oiled machine. It’s like being part of a church body. I was hooked from the very first time.”



Specialty Teams Director Madison Strausbaugh and Barbara Rash

Rwanda

Victoria Hollis is a registered nurse from Alabama who served at Kibogora Hospital.



Victoria Hollis (right)

“We had three burn victims recovering on the unit: a grandmother about 70 years old, an 18-month-old baby girl, and a 13-year-old girl. One afternoon, I watched the mother of the 13-year-old bring in a large pot of beans and rice. She carefully made plates for the grandmother, for the family taking care of her, for the baby’s mother, for her own daughter, and finally for herself. It was humbling to see her give so selflessly. This woman wasn’t wealthy or abundant in resources, yet she chose to share.

“I turned to the nurse beside me and asked if they were all family, assuming they might have been together during the same incident. The nurse told me they weren’t related and had never met before arriving at the hospital. They

came from different villages and backgrounds, but that day, they were united by a shared love that transcended boundaries. In that simple act, I saw love in its purest form. It reminded me of the widow who gave her last two mites, and it left a mark on my heart that I’ll never forget.”

Togo

Dr. April Yancey is an optometrist from Florida who served at Hopital Baptiste Biblique last September.

“One of my patients came to get glasses. We did not understand each other but I understood that he was not a believer. The Holy Spirit moved me to pray over this man. He allowed me to pray over him in my own language. My hope is that through me being there he got a glimpse of the love of Christ. Why do I do what I do? Because Jesus calls us to be a light in the world. I love eyes and I believe that sight is so precious. I have no greater satisfaction than when my patients go from not being able to read their Bible to being able to fully immerse themselves in the Word and spend time with Jesus.”





Basic dental care is not available in many rural communities in El Salvador. Dental hygienist Marya Mommsen examines a patient.

Getting to the Roots

Our Specialty Team combined dentistry and discipleship to make a lasting impact in El Salvador.

As a missionary for Youth With A Mission (YWAM), Jessica Ayala describes her work as “restoration of the heart.” She counsels Christian leaders who are personally dealing with depression and difficult relationships. Through the love of Christ, she has overcome brokenness in her own life.

With spiritual matters as her focus, Ayala never gave much thought to caring for her dental health, even when she broke one of her teeth almost in half several years ago.

“I ignored it. I thought I could just live with that,” she said.

But Ayala decided to take advantage of the opportunity to get her teeth examined when she heard that a team of dentists from World Medical Mission were coming to her YWAM base camp. The visit was part of a three-pronged partnership between Samaritan’s Purse and the ministries of Shalom Family Medical Center and YWAM in El Salvador.

“That day I didn’t really know what my teeth needed, so I just asked the doctor to check if there was anything that needs work,” said Ayala. “He examined my mouth and found that inside the broken tooth was a cavity. He asked if I wanted to rebuild my tooth.”

Ayala was hesitant at first, but the dentist allayed her fears and prayed with her. That gave her peace and, after the procedure, a new reason to smile. She thanked the team for sharing God’s love with her community.

“Using your gifts as doctors is a big blessing for many families. You are bringing Jesus to them through your life,” she said.

“Using your gifts as doctors is a big blessing for many families. You are bringing Jesus to them through your life.”

The YWAM camp was one of several sites where our Specialty Teams dental group ministered alongside Shalom staff and chaplains to bring the Gospel and quality dental care to some 300 patients in underserved areas of the country. Last fall’s excursion marked the first dental-focused initiative for our Specialty Teams program.

Since 2019, World Medical Mission has sent surgical teams with expertise in orthopedics, gynecology, and urology to perform complex operations and conduct training at several of our partner hospitals.

Branching out into the realm of dentistry opens new doors to help fill an often overlooked void in global healthcare and to meet spiritual needs.

Oral health plays a role in a person's overall physical health, which is why routine care matters.

Treatment with a Dose of Kindness

“We’ve been looking at mobilizing more dentists, and we were thinking through locations and who has established dental clinics

already set up for teams to come and work,” said Madison Strausbaugh, the Specialty Teams program manager. “Shalom Family Medical Center was one of those sites.”

Shalom operates a small dental clinic in their medical facility, where they treat the general public as well as children from their ministry-owned school and orphanage. They also oversee a mobile dental clinic that was installed in a refurbished bus. The mobile unit is outfitted with two suites and equipped for dentists to do cleanings, fillings, and extractions.

In 2022, the World Health Organization’s Global Oral Health Status Report stated that about 45% of the world’s population—some 3.5 billion people—suffer from oral diseases. About 75% of those individuals live in low- and middle-income countries.

Oral health plays a role in a person’s overall physical health, which is why routine care matters. Cardiovascular disease, impaired kidney function, and even Alzheimer’s have been linked to inflammation or infections from bacteria in the mouth.



Nutrition students from a local school encouraged villagers to take good care of their teeth.



Ricardo brought his two daughters to Shalom's dental clinic. “I feel very happy for the help you have given us,” he said.

“Most people in the United States don’t know that, let alone people here,” Strausbaugh said. “Dentistry is one of those things that you let go until it is really bad. It’s something we take for granted in the U.S. and something that’s not really paid attention to in other countries.”

Since preventive care is vital, education about dental hygiene is the first step. Specialty Teams volunteer Marya Mommsen, a dental hygienist from Pennsylvania, spent time instructing children and their parents on the importance of brushing their teeth daily. She

cautioned moms against the cultural norm to give their youngsters sugar-loaded juices before going to bed or to soothe them with these beverages when they cry or get upset.

Access to dental care may be the greatest hurdle. In El Salvador’s rural communities, most people have never seen a dentist, much less received treatment from one. For impoverished families, costs for even basic care often exceed their financial ability to pay.

While our team was serving at Shalom, a man named Ricardo brought his daughters to the dental clinic based on a neighbor’s



A young girl's smile reveals her clean teeth and gums during our team's oral health presentation at her school.

recommendation. The kindness of the medical team touched their hearts. The clinic was booked for patients that afternoon, but that did not discourage them from returning the next day.

Marya gave the girls their first teeth cleaning, working gently and at an unhurried pace. Their father was pleased.

"I feel very happy for the help you have given us and the kindness of each one of you. I feel very grateful," he said.

More Than Medicine

Building trust and relationships is the crux of Shalom's ministry, both in the clinic and at outreach events. Each patient during the dental campaign received prayer. Some came with emotional burdens. Others sought advice regarding family issues and major life decisions.

Chaplain Peter Rodriguez assisted the team by offering pastoral support to patients. As some of them shared their difficulties,

he sought to shine the light of God's Word into those circumstances. Seeing the look of renewed hope in their eyes—and smiles after their dental visit—brought him joy too.

"In Jesus' ministry, He would address a person's immediate crisis. They were hungry or sick, or there was some sort of practical issue. Through meeting that basic need, that would open their hearts and open up their willingness to see God's goodness, and then lead them to the truth," Rodriguez said.

"That's what we are doing through dentistry. There is a lack of that resource in this country. To be able to give them this service for free, and to take away physical pain, and to make them more beautiful, I think that is something that they really value. Then they are more willing to hear the Gospel."

"I think that is something that they really value. Then they are more willing to hear the Gospel."

Jessica Ayala agrees. She is one of the patients who is now free from discomfort and no longer self-conscious when she smiles. But more importantly, she recognizes the urgency for people to get to the root of their ultimate need for God.

"The way the dentist restored my tooth was a reminder of how God is restoring me," she said. 🌍



World Medical Mission is looking for dental specialists to serve on short-term trips with our Specialty Teams and in our partner mission hospitals. **To learn more, please contact us at wmminfo@samaritan.org.**



LEFT: Each patient received a Spanish language Bible.

BELOW: A staff member prays with patients.

BOTTOM: Marla Zoch, spiritual care specialist and interpreter, shows the love of Christ in simple, tangible ways so that patients are more willing to hear the Gospel.





Dr. Paul Zenker, a pediatrician, has served with World Medical Mission in Kenya and Ethiopia.

There Is Always Hope

A pediatrician sees childlike faith in action through his patients and their families.

Ayana (name changed) was fighting for her life, and a blood transfusion was the only recourse to save it. The day before, the malaria-sickened 2-year-old had been admitted to Soddo Christian Hospital with dangerously low hemoglobin levels that required a transfusion.

Options for finding a compatible donor had failed. Due to the malaria epidemic—2024 was one of the worst in Ethiopia over the past decade—the hospital lab was running low on its blood supply for transfusions. The child also had an unusual blood type that was not available.

Her distraught father offered to donate his blood. However, even that consideration was not viable because of government regulations and the lack of direct transfusion supplies at Soddo. Meanwhile, Ayana's condition continued to deteriorate.

Dr. Paul Zenker, a pediatric emergency medicine physician from Indiana, was involved with her case. He arrived at Soddo in October for a two-week trip with World Medical Mission—his second visit of the year to the hospital. This time he came to fill in for two staff pediatricians who were attending a conference out of the country.

During patient rounds that morning, Zenker and a hospital chaplain spent time with

Ayana's father, explaining the situation. Other medical staff joined them in prayer for Ayana. "Afterwards I talked to another physician and explained that the hospital lab and the

"He realized he was going to lose his daughter if she didn't get that blood transfusion. ... Soddo had already lost several children."

local blood bank didn't have her blood type," Zenker said. "She told me, 'Let me check one more time with the blood bank and see if any of her type has come in.'"

A short time later, the physician shared the good news of her phone conversation with the blood bank. Their lab had received a new batch of blood that was compatible with Ayana's blood type!

That afternoon, the blood was delivered to Soddo and staff nurses transfused Ayana. The oxygen-rich red blood cells quickly began

to revive her body. Less than 24 hours later, the little girl was alert, taking sustenance, and released to go home.

“Her dad was beyond happy,” recalled Zenker. “He realized he was going to lose his daughter if she didn’t get that blood transfusion. And without it, she wouldn’t have survived. Soddo had already lost several children to the malaria outbreak.”

Zenker does not think it is a coincidence that “this blood just showed up” soon after the team prayed for the child. “That was the Lord,” he said.

While not every young patient’s story ended in this way, Zenker felt tremendously blessed to be a part of God’s work and to minister the love of Christ to families in Ethiopia. He also served on a Samaritan’s Purse cleft lip surgery team to the Democratic Republic of the Congo last July.

‘Juggling Act’

In 2021, the physician left full-time pediatric emergency medicine to pursue his passions—mission work and teaching. Having traded one job for at least six part-time endeavors, he probably works as much now as he did before retiring.



Malaria claims the lives of many children under the age of 5.

That includes picking up shifts as a pediatric hospitalist in a hospital in South Bend, teaching emergency medicine classes, going on short-term mission trips, being the doctor at a Christian youth summer camp, serving alongside his wife in church ministries—and perhaps most rewarding—experiencing the joys of being a grandfather.

“We stay active, but it’s a juggling act,” admits Zenker. “I try to discern how the Lord would have me to spend my time.”

Serving internationally has always been a passion, beginning with his postcollege Peace Corps assignment teaching high school in the South Pacific island of Tonga. After the Peace Corps, he focused on a new calling to go to medical school to study pediatrics, followed by a master’s degree in public health and tropical medicine.

Over the years Zenker has volunteered with several organizations around the world. Some of the highlights were participating in disaster relief trips to Haiti and the Philippines and serving on cleft palate teams in Peru. However, his first experience working inside a mission hospital wasn’t until 2017 when he went to Tenwek Hospital in Kenya with World Medical Mission.

The invigorating worship and sense of joy among the staff left a lasting impression on him. “Tenwek was having revival services in the evenings, and a lot of the residents and interns attended if they weren’t on call. We prayed before starting rounds. There were pastors praying with patients every day and leading the nurses in praise every morning in the wards,” Zenker fondly recalled. “I would be doing patient rounds with the other doctors, and the only thing I could hear were the nurses singing at the end of the ward.”

“I had never been to a hospital like that in the United States or overseas,” he said. “I thought, ‘This is what I am going to keep doing.’”

Zenker deeply admires the tireless commitment of career missionary doctors. He considers it a privilege to give them a break by covering night calls, teaching classes, or as in the case in October, overseeing the care of patients so that two of the doctors at Soddo could enjoy a respite.



“We are called to serve the Lord and spread His Word so people can come to know Him, and medical work is a way to do that,” Zenker said. “I think the Gospel has spread a lot through mission hospitals around the world, and I want to support that cause.”

A Foundation of Faith and Hope

Communicating with patients sometimes required a translator since Zenker does not speak the Amharic language, so he found it easier to discuss matters of faith with younger English-speaking physicians.

Throughout more than 40 years of pediatric practice, and particularly while working in the ER, he has seen children die. It’s traumatic for the parents and family, but it can be difficult for the physician too.

During his first trip to Soddo in February 2024, a child passed away from measles, a disease that can be easily prevented through vaccination. Shaken by the situation, two Ethiopian doctors asked Zenker how he deals with the death of such young patients.

It was an important question, especially because physicians see some patients recover

fully, while others die before their first birthday.

Zenker took the opportunity to share his confidence in God’s love and purpose for every child.

“I told them it would be harder for me to deal with a child dying if I didn’t have a firm belief in the Lord,” Zenker said. “But if you have that belief, then you know that this life is not all there is. So there is always hope.”

One of his patients in October was a girl who had a severe congenital deformity. Her life would most likely be filled with medical challenges and eventually cut short, yet she and her parents exhibited a joy that took the seasoned doctor by surprise.

“She is going to die from all of her conditions, and her family knows that, but they still took wonderful care of her. Whenever I saw her, she was smiling and happy. That is such an expression of love.”

Seeing his patients’ reliance on God affirms his faith too.

“The way that people are open and receptive to the Lord, and the faith that they have is really uplifting,” Zenker said. “That is a great encouragement to me. God is working.” ☺



Light that Overcomes the Darkness

Biomedical technicians help save lives and shine the light of the Gospel at Nyankunde.

An unexpected disruption of electrical power isn't just an inconvenience for rural mission hospitals. For some patients, it is a matter of life or death.

Dr. Warren Cooper, a staff general surgeon at Nyankunde Hospital in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is well acquainted with such challenges.

"The power went out multiple times a day, often several times during a surgical procedure. We did run a generator frequently, but often we would run out of fuel for the generator," said Cooper.

The exorbitant cost of fuel made it unfeasible to operate the generator 24 hours a day. Sometimes the diesel was tainted, like the time the hospital received a jerry can of fuel mixed with vegetable oil. The overworked generator occasionally broke down, requiring additional repairs that they could not afford.

Electrical service has been notoriously unreliable at Nyankunde for decades. Oxygen machines, sterilizers, and diagnostic equipment cannot work without power. Tragically, patients who are oxygen dependent have died.

Cooper said the hospital was losing one or two babies on average a week due to the lack of oxygen. In the adult wards, the situation was almost as severe. Nurses and doctors on night duty tried to provide care to patients by the light of a cell phone.

Electrical service has been notoriously unreliable at Nyankunde for decades.

Oxygen machines, sterilizers, and diagnostic equipment cannot work without power.

A World Medical Mission technical support team led by assistant director David Bucklin traveled to the hospital in August to complete

Dr. Warren Cooper (right) is grateful to have reliable electrical service now at Nyankunde Hospital in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



TOP: Dr. Cooper (left) and Dr. Robert Spencer (right) get ready to install a generator at the hospital. **ABOVE:** Solar panels on the roof capture the sun's energy. **LEFT:** Electrician David Bucklin, who leads the World Medical Mission technical support team, helped complete installation of the solar project last August.

installation of what has been a multiyear solar power project. The new system is capable of producing 33 kilowatts of energy and is being used to power the surgical suites, ICU, and the neonatal intensive care unit.

"Since the large capacity solar system was installed, we have had power 24 hours a day, without interruption!"

Dr. Cooper raved about the remarkable difference since the new system was implemented. The hospital has not lost power at any time, even during days of minimal sunlight. Now he and other surgeons are able to perform more intensive procedures like endoscopies and laparoscopic operations without dread of a power outage.

"It's amazing how much better a hospital runs when there is electricity," he said.

The technical support team, which included staff electrician Peter Schmitz and volunteer Dr. Robert Spencer, also replaced the hospital's stressed generator with a new one and revamped the oxygen-generating system. Little is much when aging equipment can be salvaged. In addition to setting up a new oxygen concentrator for the ICU and operating rooms, the team also refurbished the older model for use in the NICU.

Hospital administrators sent a letter of thanks to World Medical Mission and Samaritan's Purse expressing their deep appreciation for the work done by our team: "Since the large capacity solar system was installed,

we have had power 24 hours a day, without interruption! This has improved the care we are able to deliver to patients. Many babies have survived with oxygen who would have died before. This has allowed the hospital to improve care and reduce the mortality rate. ... The electrical system will help ensure quality of care and a high standard of treatment for many patients and will save many lives, as it already has."

For more than half a century, Nyankunde Hospital has treated the sick and saved lives, but its core mission is to share the Good News of the Savior with everyone who comes through its doors.

That's why the dedicated service of our 19-member World Medical Mission biomedical and lab support staff takes on eternal significance as they help to maintain hospital machinery. In so doing, the staff at mission hospitals are equipped to meet medical needs and to have opportunities to tell patients about the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Turning on the lights in a hospital is valuable, but it is so much more important to shine the light of Jesus Christ in the hearts of people in this region," said Nyankunde administrators in their letter to Samaritan's Purse. "Thank you for helping us to do that." ☺



A mother consoles her young daughter in the pediatric ward.

GOD

— AT THE —
CENTER

A chaplain at Nkhoma Mission Hospital in Malawi reads Psalm 63 in the Chichewa language to Ireen, a surgical patient. Ireen said, "The words uplift my life."





Drs. Brian and Abigail Ginn and their son, Henry, dress up for Independence Day in Papua New Guinea.



Cow Horns and Kangaroos

Blog by Dr. Brian Ginn, a general surgeon at Nazarene General Hospital in Papua New Guinea. Brian and his wife, Abigail, a pediatrician, are serving through the Post-Residency Program.

There is a lot of routine in my work, but there are also some unexpected things that come up. One night when I was on call, the ER contacted me around 7 p.m. about a 12-year-old boy who got gored in the neck by a cow's horn. It was in Zone 2 of the neck, where all of the important things are, and given his large hematoma, he warranted a neck exploration. The wound was about 8 centimeters deep. I could fit my entire index finger in it. Amazingly it missed his carotid artery, jugular vein, esophagus, and trachea. It took a couple of days for the swelling to go down, but he's doing all right.

Another miraculous case happened on a night I wasn't on call. Dr. Sheryl, my senior surgery colleague, called at 4 a.m. because she needed another set of hands. A young man had come in who was shot in the upper portion of his abdomen—straight through. Sheryl had already stopped the bleeding from his liver, but there was still massive bleeding from behind the liver. We cross-clamped the aorta and clamped the blood supply to the liver, but the bleeding didn't slow down at all.

This raised our concern for a hepatic vein or retrohepatic inferior vena cava (IVC)

injury. Our hospital is not equipped like a Level 1 trauma center in the U.S., but even if it was, retrohepatic IVC injuries are fatal the majority of the time. The patient was very unstable, and it was hard to keep giving him blood as fast as he was losing it.

After discussing options, we chose to pack his abdomen—literally packing 18 surgical sponges inside in an effort to stop the bleeding with pressure. We hoped this would

"There is a lot of routine in my work, but there are also some unexpected things that come up."

buy him enough time to be with his family before he would die (maybe a few hours) instead of dying alone in the OR.

To our amazement, he did not die. We don't have an ICU where we could keep him on a ventilator, but he stabilized over the weekend. However, those surgical sponges were still



Abigail visits with a family on one of her palliative care excursions to a nearby village. The baby in the yellow outfit is the patient. Abigail was accompanied by a hospital chaplain.

in there, and we couldn't leave them forever. We took him back to the OR on a Monday morning (three days after he came in shot) and removed all 18 sponges. There was no more bleeding.

We optimistically watched him post-operatively. He got stronger, ate, walked, and most importantly, didn't bleed. Amazing! Venous bleeds can often stop with prolonged pressure, but the IVC and hepatics are very large. We told him that he is a miracle man and that God is watching out for him.

On a much lighter note, as I was discussing with the patient our plans to take him back to the OR to remove the surgical sponges, I made a sizeable language faux pas. The Tok Pisin word for cotton is "kapuk," which is the word we use for surgical sponge. The word for tree kangaroo is only one letter different—"kapul." So in attempting to explain that we

"In attempting to explain that we had left 18 sponges inside to stop the bleeding ... what I actually said was, 'We put 18 tree kangaroos inside your abdomen.'"

had left 18 sponges inside to stop the bleeding and we now need to take them out, what I actually said was: "We put 18 tree kangaroos inside your abdomen, and we are going back to surgery tomorrow to remove them!"



TOP LEFT: Abigail helped deliver these twins via C-section and rejoiced when they and their mother were strong enough to be discharged. **ABOVE:** Brian holds up a bush knife that he removed from a patient's abdomen. The patient made a full recovery. **LEFT:** Brian removed the spleen from this 12-year-old girl. **BOTTOM:** A glimpse of the hospital's highland setting.





Erienne Ballard toured the Mayan ruins at Tikal National Park during her service trip to Hospital Shalom in Guatemala.

God's Perfect Timing

Delayed answers to prayers sometimes reveal a greater divine purpose.

The flight distance from Erienne Ballard's home in Cleveland, Ohio, to San Benito, Guatemala, is roughly 2,000 miles, but it took her five years to get there.

Looking back, the emergency room nurse can now picture how God was weaving together a series of delays and disappointments that were in fact divine appointments. Through those experiences, He finally brought Ballard to her original planned destination in September—positioning her at the exact time and place to help save a woman's life.

In October 2019, Ballard was in her junior year at Malone University. Pursuing a double major in nursing and global studies, she was planning to go to Hospital Shalom in Guatemala the next summer for a study abroad program and to do research for her honors thesis.

"I had the entire thing planned out," she said. "Then COVID hit the next semester, and my studies and thesis went through nine different plans. That included another attempt to go to Guatemala and a plan to go to Nepal. I ended up in Burundi."

Ballard pressed on, writing a thesis about the cultural and economic impacts on nursing care in Burundi. After graduation, a door

opened for her to go to Nepal during the winter of 2023.

Since then Ballard, a third generation nurse, has gained professional experience working in the ICU and the ER at medical facilities in Ohio. However, her old longing to go on a mission trip to Guatemala resurfaced last April.

Looking back, the ER nurse can now picture how God was weaving together a series of delays and disappointments that were in fact divine appointments.

"I know people from Malone University who lead trips to Hospital Shalom for cross-cultural studies. I remember sitting at my grandmother's kitchen table, and I said, 'Grandma, maybe I should reach out.'"

She applied through World Medical Mission. "Things started moving. I got the

vacation time. I felt like I was supposed to be there. When I was working on my thesis in college, I had to fight for so many things, but this time I didn't have to fight. It all just worked out."

'Connecting Every Part'

With all of the details falling into place remarkably easily, Ballard suddenly was riddled with anxious thoughts. She was notified before the trip that her responsibilities would include teaching as well as providing nursing care.

"I worried that my Spanish wouldn't be good enough, or that I wouldn't fulfill the teaching needs of the hospital. I felt that maybe I wasn't old enough," she said. "Finally I told myself, 'OK, I'm here to work and to help.'" And that's what she determined with God's guidance she would do.

Having recently treated a stroke patient at her place of employment in Ohio, Ballard prepared an entire lesson on the recognition of stroke symptoms and the appropriate treatment. She wrote the materials in Spanish and emailed the draft to her high school Spanish teacher for proofreading.

A popular acronym in English for the identification of stroke symptoms is "BE FAST," which stands for: B=Balance, E=Eyes,

F=Face, A=Arms, S=Speech, T=Timing.

Ballard used a Spanish version called "RAPIDO," pointing out telltale signs of a stroke event such as facial droop and slurred speech to a group of nurses the day after she arrived at Hospital Shalom.

*With all of the details
falling into place
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with anxious thoughts.*

She also taught them about ischemic strokes, the most common form of stroke, which is caused by blood clots or other blockage in a blood vessel, versus a hemorrhagic stroke, which involves a brain bleed. Both types of strokes can result in permanent brain damage and death. Immediate medical attention is essential.

During dinner that evening, Ballard was talking with Shalom's co-founder, Doris Spurrier, when one of the Guatemalan



An earlier trip to Nepal helped prepare Ballard for the challenges and rewards of serving in an overseas hospital.



Ballard assisted in the care of trauma patients in the emergency room.

hospital administrators rushed over to their table. The administrator poured out a story in Spanish with such a rapid succession of details that Ballard had difficulty comprehending.

Spurrier turned to Ballard and asked, "Did you understand what she said?"

Ballard nodded that she had grasped part of the story.

"You left the hospital at 1 o'clock, and at 3 o'clock a patient came in who met three of the five criteria you taught to the nurses," Spurrier explained. "They realized that the patient was having a stroke and they sent her to get a CT scan because you said that was a good diagnostic. The CT scan results showed the patient had a huge bleed in her head that was 4.1 centimeters by 3 centimeters."

The woman received medications to stabilize her blood pressure and to prevent exacerbation of the bleed.

The next morning, Ballard went to see the patient. The woman, who was around 60 years old, was stable and resting. She was still

experiencing weakness in her left side and had some vision issues and slurred speech, but her prognosis was good.

"The nurses told me how much better the patient was doing compared to the day before," recalled Ballard. "That's when all of my insecurities and doubts about whether I was supposed to be in Guatemala and how I could help went away. God timed it perfectly that if this woman was going to have a stroke, the staff at Shalom would be ready for it."

The patient was released a couple of days later. For Ballard, it was a beautiful reminder that God is indeed at work in the details of every human life.

"We could spend our lifetimes looking back to figure out every piece and part and how they all connect and the ways that God works in our lives," Ballard said. "It's moments like these when I see God's colorful lines connecting every part. I am so thankful that His timing of everything works just like that."

Afterward, the charge nurse at Shalom asked Ballard to teach a refresher class on CPR. She also taught another session on stroke awareness.

Coming Full Circle

Most of Ballard's work took place in the emergency room, where she assisted in the care of trauma patients and other cases. That's where she feels most comfortable. She said she loves the variety and intensity of the ER, what she describes as "organized chaos."

"Honestly, the best analogy I can make about ER is when I worked at Starbucks during college. I loved the fast pace, having to focus on so many things at once, and not knowing what the next order would be," she said. "When I work in the ER, there's always something new, and I'm hopping around so



Hiking and making new friends are some of the highlights of Ballard's (right) overseas experiences. Next stop—perhaps to Antarctica?

and fellow native Ohioans immediately. They continue to stay in touch.

"I hope that I will have lived a life like theirs by the time I'm their age," Ballard reflected, "that I can impact others in the way that they have impacted me and see how God has worked in our lives."

Having left part of her heart at Hospital Shalom, Ballard said she looks forward to returning when her schedule allows. She is also open to new international mission experiences—wherever and whenever God presents the opportunity.

"Five years ago, God put Guatemala, Nepal, and Burundi in my heart, but He wanted these places to be a part of my life in His timing. His timing is perfect. I am ever so blessed to have been to all three of these countries, and my heart is in all of them," said Ballard.

"I will say, though, that Guatemala was one of the best prayers God answered, as I had poured my heart into coming here all those years ago. I am excited to have come full circle."

For someone who craves new adventures and challenges, Ballard has a few more aspirations on her bucket list.

"God has preordained so many things for us, and it's comforting that He knows us deeply."

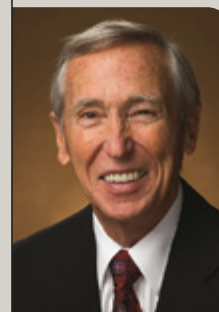
At one time she considered joining the Air Force. Working as an emergency flight nurse in Antarctica was another dream. Since a need exists for international flight nurses, perhaps God will provide a way for her to combine her passions for missions, medicine, and aviation.

"God has preordained so many things for us, and it's comforting that He knows us deeply," said Ballard. "Some of my goals were past dreams before I learned about opportunities to do missions. However, Antarctica would still be very cool." 🌐

much that by the end of the night, I've done a million different things that I didn't expect."

At Shalom, Ballard jumped in to help with a trauma case involving a construction site accident. What was most memorable to her was how she and the staff nurses, despite their language and cultural differences, worked in tandem to care for the man's injuries.

Building relationships is what Ballard values most, and she especially cherished the evening conversations with Doris and Tim Spurrier during her two weeks in Guatemala. Ballard bonded with the long-term missionary couple



ANSWERING THE CALL

Dr. Richard Furman,
co-founder of World Medical Mission

As World Medical Mission grew, it became evident that there was a need to develop specialty teams of doctors who could operate on a group of patients with similar needs. The Specialty Teams program was begun, and recent teams have included orthopedics, urology, OB/GYN, and dentistry. The mission hospital lines up multiple patients who can be treated by a team of our doctors during a short-term period. The spiritual as well as the physical health of the patients is emphasized.

Franklin Graham has stated that medicine is like a magnet that brings people to the hospital where they can hear the Gospel. The same focus applies to the Specialty Teams program. These projects have been set up with the primary goal of being able to witness to these patients and their families about the plan of salvation. We send the specialist to perform the medical work, but we also include chaplains as a primary part of the team. The chaplains pray with each patient. They give patients a Bible and help refer them to a Christ-centered church in their community. The spiritual emphasis continues when patients return to the mission hospital for follow-up medical treatment.

At Egbe Hospital in Nigeria, we provided free orthopedic care to more than 40 patients throughout nine surgical days. The hospital chaplaincy team ministered to the patients who received surgery. Every

patient received a Bible or audio Bible in their language. In Kenya's Litein Hospital, another team completed over 30 obstetric procedures including vesicovaginal and perineal tear repairs. Multiple patients reported a "change in their hearts" at having seen the love of God through this campaign. During two trips to El Salvador, hundreds of patients received dental care at the Shalom Family Medical Center and several mobile unit outreaches. These trips demonstrated to us that with dentistry, we can maximize the opportunity for spiritual impact with patients through fellowship, prayer, and the distribution of Christian literature.

The Specialty Teams program enables doctors who do not have a four-to-six week timeframe to take off from their practice to go for a much shorter period. In particular, we are looking for dental specialists. If your schedule allows, please contact us for service opportunities. All for the Lord's glory! 🌐

*"Not unto us,
O LORD, not
unto us, but to
Your name
give glory."*

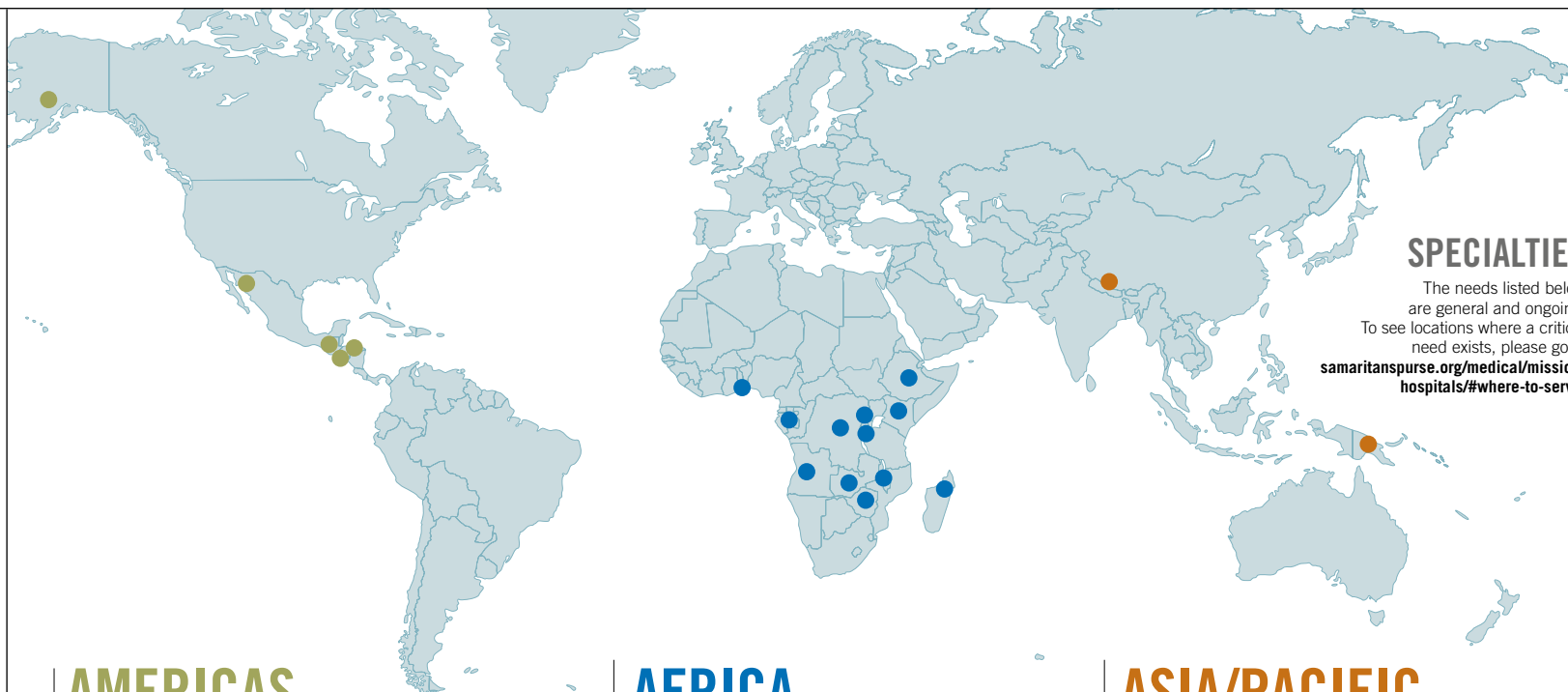
—PSALM 115:1

Calling for help

Please pray for these mission hospitals and consider volunteering if you are a medical professional in one of the following specialties.



KENYA



SPECIALTIES

The needs listed below are general and ongoing. To see locations where a critical need exists, please go to samaritanspurse.org/medical/mission-hospitals/#where-to-serve.

AMERICAS

Alaska
El Salvador
Guatemala
Honduras
Mexico

AFRICA

Angola
Burundi
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Ethiopia
Gabon
Kenya
Madagascar
Malawi
Rwanda
Togo
Zambia
Zimbabwe

ASIA/PACIFIC

Nepal
Papua New Guinea

If you are interested in serving overseas, please complete our Volunteer Application online at samaritanspurse.org/medical/volunteer-application.

Please pray for these mission hospitals and their ongoing critical needs. For further questions, call World Medical Mission at (828) 278-1173.

ANESTHESIOLOGY

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Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Chitokoloki Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
Hospital Baptiste Biblique, **Togo**
Hospital de Kalukembe, **Angola**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
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Karanda Mission Hospital, **Zimbabwe**
Kibogora Hospital, **Rwanda**
Macha Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
Mukinge Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
Nazarene General Hospital, **Papua New Guinea**
Nkhoma Mission Hospital, **Malawi**
Restricted Country
Soddo Christian Hospital, **Ethiopia**
Specialty Teams
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

CARDIOLOGY

AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
Hospital Shalom, **Guatemala**
Karanda Mission Hospital, **Zimbabwe**
Macha Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
Myungsung Christian Medical Center, **Ethiopia**
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Restricted Country
Shalom Family Medical Center, **El Salvador**
Soddo Christian Hospital, **Ethiopia**
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

CARDIOTHORACIC SURGERY

Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

COLORECTAL SURGERY

Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Hospital Baptiste Biblique, **Togo**
Hospital de Kalukembe, **Angola**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**

Hospital Shalom, **Guatemala**
Karanda Mission Hospital, **Zimbabwe**
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DENTISTRY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
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Chogoria Hospital, **Kenya**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
Hospital Shalom, **Guatemala**
Kapsowar Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
Kibogora Hospital, **Rwanda**
Macha Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
Myungsung Christian Medical Center, **Ethiopia**
Nazarene General Hospital, **Papua New Guinea**
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Shalom Family Medical Center, **El Salvador**
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

DERMATOLOGY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
Restricted Country
Shalom Family Medical Center, **El Salvador**
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

EMERGENCY MEDICINE

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
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Good News Hospital, **Madagascar**
Hospital Baptiste Biblique, **Togo**
Hospital de Kalukembe, **Angola**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
Kapsowar Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
Karanda Mission Hospital, **Zimbabwe**
Mukinge Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
Nazarene General Hospital, **Papua New Guinea**
Nkhoma Mission Hospital, **Malawi**
Restricted Country

Shalom Family Medical Center, **El Salvador**
Soddo Christian Hospital, **Ethiopia**
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

ENDOCRINOLOGY

Hospital Shalom, **Guatemala**
Myungsung Christian Medical Center, **Ethiopia**
Restricted Country
Shalom Family Medical Center, **El Salvador**

FAMILY PRACTICE

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Bongolo Hospital, **Gabon**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Chitokoloki Hospital, **Zambia**
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Macha Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
Mukinge Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
Myungsung Christian Medical Center, **Ethiopia**
Nazarene General Hospital, **Papua New Guinea**
Nkhoma Mission Hospital, **Malawi**
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Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

GASTROENTEROLOGY

AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Bongolo Hospital, **Gabon**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Hospital Baptiste Biblique, **Togo**
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Karanda Mission Hospital, **Zimbabwe**
Macha Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
Myungsung Christian Medical Center, **Ethiopia**
Nkhoma Mission Hospital, **Malawi**
Restricted Country
Shalom Family Medical Center, **El Salvador**
Soddo Christian Hospital, **Ethiopia**
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

GENERAL SURGERY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Bongolo Hospital, **Gabon**
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Chitokoloki Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
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Hospital de Kalukembe, **Angola**
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Macha Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
Mukinge Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
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Nazarene General Hospital, **Papua New Guinea**
Restricted Country
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Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

HEMATOLOGY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Macha Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
Restricted Country
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INTERNAL MEDICINE

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
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Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
Jungle Hospital, **Honduras**
Kapsowar Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
Macha Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
Mukinge Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
Nazarene General Hospital, **Papua New Guinea**



NIGER

Nkhoma Mission Hospital, **Malawi**
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Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

NEONATOLOGY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
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Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

NEPHROLOGY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
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NEUROLOGY

Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
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NEUROSURGERY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
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Specialty Teams
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

OBSTETRICS/GYNECOLOGY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
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Bongolo Hospital, **Gabon**
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ONCOLOGY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
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OPHTHALMOLOGY

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Chitokoloki Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
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Kapsowar Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
Karanda Mission Hospital, **Zimbabwe**
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ORAL MAXILLOFACIAL SURGERY

Bongolo Hospital, **Gabon**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
Kapsowar Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
Kibogora Hospital, **Rwanda**
Myungsung Christian Medical Center, **Ethiopia**
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Bongolo Hospital, **Gabon**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**

Chogoria Hospital, **Kenya**
Hopital Baptiste Biblique, **Togo**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
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Restricted Country
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Soddo Christian Hospital, **Ethiopia**
Specialty Teams
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

OTOLARYNGOLOGY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Bongolo Hospital, **Gabon**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Hopital Baptiste Biblique, **Togo**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
Myungsung Christian Medical Center, **Ethiopia**
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Shalom Family Medical Center, **El Salvador**
Soddo Christian Hospital, **Ethiopia**
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

PATHOLOGY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Restricted Country
Soddo Christian Hospital, **Ethiopia**

PEDIATRIC ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
Hospital Shalom, **Guatemala**
Karanda Mission Hospital, **Zimbabwe**
Nkhoma Mission Hospital, **Malawi**
Soddo Christian Hospital, **Ethiopia**
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

PEDIATRICS

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Bongolo Hospital, **Gabon**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Chitokoloki Hospital, **Kenya**
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Nkhoma Mission Hospital, **Malawi**
Restricted Country

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Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

PEDIATRIC SURGERY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Bongolo Hospital, **Gabon**
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Nazarene General Hospital, **Papua New Guinea**
Nkhoma Mission Hospital, **Malawi**
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Soddo Christian Hospital, **Ethiopia**
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

PHYSICAL MEDICINE & REHABILITATION

AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
Soddo Christian Hospital, **Ethiopia**

PLASTIC SURGERY

AIC Kijabe Hospital, **Kenya**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Chitokoloki Mission Hospital, **Zambia**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
Hospital Shalom, **Guatemala**
Kibogora Hospital, **Rwanda**
Restricted Country
Soddo Christian Hospital, **Ethiopia**
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

PSYCHIATRY

AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Chogoria Hospital, **Kenya**
Restricted Country
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

PSYCHOLOGY

AIC Kijabe Hospital, **Kenya**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Chogoria Hospital, **Kenya**
Restricted Country

PULMONOLOGY

Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**

RADIOLOGY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Chogoria Hospital, **Kenya**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
Hospital Shalom, **Guatemala**
Kapsowar Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
Nkhoma Mission Hospital, **Malawi**



NEPAL

Restricted Country
Shalom Medical Center, **El Salvador**
Soddo Christian Hospital, **Ethiopia**
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

RHEUMATOLOGY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Hospital Shalom, **Guatemala**
Myungsung Christian Medical Center, **Ethiopia**
Restricted Country

THORACIC SURGERY

AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Tenwek Mission Hospital, **Kenya**

UROLOGY

AIC Kijabe Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
AIC Litein Hospital, **Kenya**
Bongolo Hospital, **Gabon**
Centro Evangelico de Medicina do Lubango, **Angola**
Hopital Baptiste Biblique, **Togo**
Hospital Loma de Luz, **Honduras**
Hospital Shalom, **Guatemala**
Kapsowar Mission Hospital, **Kenya**
Karanda Mission Hospital, **Zimbabwe**
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“ HE HEALS THE BROKENHEARTED AND BINDS UP THEIR WOUNDS . ” —Psalm 147:3