



*Let your light shine....*

↑ Entrance to the surgical ward, where our daily census is 80-90 surgical patients (consults elsewhere)

## NIGER: Surgical Ward

by David Winston, DO

***14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.***

Matthew 5:14-16

Glorify the Lord! So many lives being touched.

When I think of SIM Galmi Hospital in Niger, West Africa, I think of "a city on a hill" from Matthew 5:14-16. Galmi may not be on a physical hill, but it is an oasis in a desert—literally and figuratively.

The hospital is openly Christian amidst a population of >93% Muslim, and the light of the Gospel is certainly not hidden under a basket.

Patients come from very far distances, even crossing the Saharan desert, to receive help. Many times, they are practically hoping for a miracle given the severity of their illness.

I must confess that I have never been in a hospital with so many diseases in advanced stages, nor so much physical pain and suffering as I have witnessed here....

I have seen patients come in with black, dead limbs from traditional binding; young children on the brink of death from typhoid, with their intestines leaking stool into their bellies; fractured limbs with bones sticking out; flesh-eating infections where patients need so much dead flesh removed that you see down to muscle like in an anatomy textbook; people dying within minutes of arrival with

little you can do to prevent it from how late they presented; and I have likely seen as many young children die as I have adults....

Amidst the bleak outlook for many, they find compassionate medical treatment and spiritual hope from the staff at Galmi. We operate on 20-30 patients a day.

The Jesus Film plays on small TVs scattered throughout the crowded hospital. Evangelists comfort and share the hope found in Jesus with patients and families. Physicians pray for healing over their patients. Whatever can be offered to bring healing to body or soul is offered in love.

I have seen the Lord spare lives I thought for certain would be lost, and through these acts of healing some are responsive to the Gospel.

I hope that in the stories that follow and from future newsletters that you'll be able to catch a glimpse of the Lord's amazing work here.

Thank you for your continued prayers and for those of you able to help financially support!

## and now for some vignettes....

### Cancer in a child....

A case of Burkitt Lymphoma

On my very first day in surgical clinic, I never anticipated that I would be needing to share with a father that his son likely had cancer.

The young boy had a large facial tumor by his jaw that had rapidly come up over a couple weeks. The father had suspected it may be an abscess and brought him to have it drained.

As I gathered more history and performed a thorough exam and ultrasound, I realized this certainly was not merely an abscess... this was a tumor and likely Burkitt Lymphoma, a

highly aggressive cancer that is quite rare in the US but more common here in West Africa.

Fortunately, since these lymphomas develop so rapidly, they are often quite responsive to chemotherapy.

I prayed for the patient and his family and sent him to the medical side of the hospital to initiate his critically important chemotherapy treatment.

The hospital has a limited supply of particular chemotherapy drugs, which thankfully

includes those needed for treatment of Burkitt Lymphoma.

I had the privilege of following up on him during a future chemo treatment and the tumor has already considerably reduced and he appears to be tolerating the chemo well enough.

We pray for his continued good response to the treatment and that he and his family would know God's love for him and grace in bringing him to the hospital in time for treatment!

### Obstruction!

Pediatric surgery for bowel obstruction

Many years ago, I had considered becoming a pediatric surgeon, and Galmi is the perfect place for one with how many children we operate on!

One example was a young 5-week-old baby that came with a distended belly and inability to eat without vomiting for several days.

His intestines were so dilated from air building up in front of the obstruction that you could actually see the shape of the loops of bowel bulging on his belly.

His mother was understandably quite concerned when she brought him to us, and we prayed for skill and wisdom to care for him well as you especially don't want to perform an unnecessary surgery on a little baby.

We took him to surgery and found several tight bands that needed to be cut to free the obstruction. The operation went very smoothly and we praised the Lord for His guidance and equipping.

The baby recovered well, and it is always so special to operate delicately on a precious baby and see good results.



↑ The dark oval shapes in the x-ray are intestines filled with air and you can see "air fluid levels" (flat bottom to the loops which suggests a bowel obstruction, with fluid pooled on the bottom of the loops of bowel in this upright abdominal x-ray).



# Elephantiasis....

Case of Lymphatic filariasis affecting the leg

The pathology I have seen here in Galmi, Niger is different from Malawi, and I continue to be astounded by the number of what I had considered rare diseases which are present here.

Part of that may be due to geographical differences in disease distribution, but it may also come from the sheer volume of patients, which is much higher than in Malawi, and they are often coming from great distances with advanced manifestations by the time they arrive.

One disease I have now seen a few times here is lymphatic filariasis, which many know by the name "elephantiasis."

This disease causes a lot of suffering in tropical regions such as here in West Africa.

It is caused by the bite of infected mosquitoes which transmit larvae which develop into adult worms. These worms then migrate to and block the lymphatic system of the person, causing lymph fluid to accumulate and subsequent massive lymphedema over the following years.

One man in his twenties came with this significant lymphedema of his left leg and asked if we could just amputate his leg, as he was exhausted from years of it continuing to increase in size and the heavy burden he bore every day needing to drag it around.

Amputation would likely not be in his best interest as there are other advanced surgeries that may yield acceptable results for managing this, so we did not go along with amputation and will try to find a better solution.

It is challenging to try to fully imagine what life is like for him carrying this giant leg around day after day.

Elephantiasis reminds me of the burden of Islam so many here are carrying around each day, and I long for them to be able to experience the freedom of having that heavy weight removed.

I cannot even begin to imagine the impact of daily waking up hoping that your good will outweigh your bad at final judgment, striving with insecurity and guilt with no assurance of where you will spend eternity....

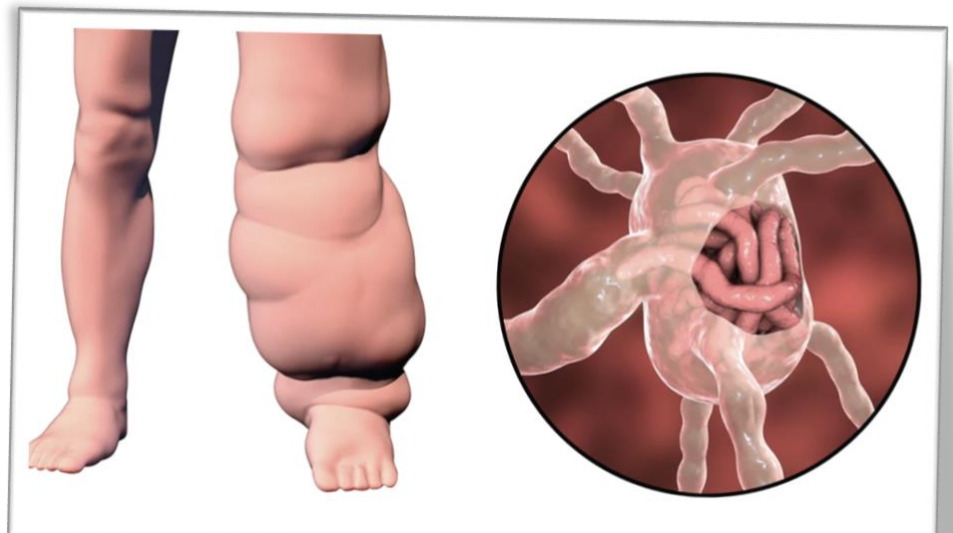
This is all they have known, and to leave it would be cutting themselves off from family, community, and everything they have grown up with....

As I hear the call to prayer and see people throughout the hospital kneeling on their mats and praying throughout the day, my heart goes out to them and I silently pray for their eyes to be opened to the hope found in Christ and that they would be delivered from this burden they daily carry....



*28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.<sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.<sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

Matthew 11:28-30



# “Jesus is the One who healed you!”

Discharge of a gentleman who had been critically ill

For patients who have had a prolonged hospitalization with many valleys along the way, it is a joy to see them finally recover enough to be able to be discharged.

During my early weeks here, that was the case with a gentleman who had been here for many weeks long before I arrived, who came with a flesh-eating bacterial infection that had spread across his chest wall and caused severe destruction.

His chest wall and flank were exposed muscle, he had a chest tube draining pus from his lung, and he had been on oxygen many days, with a

very poor prognosis and everyone wondering whether he would survive.

During times when he had seemed close to death, he had spoken with one of the evangelists here and was interested in hearing more about the Gospel, although he was still in the contemplative stage as so much was new for him to consider.

As we rounded on him the day we were discharging him home, the surgeon shared with him, “Jesus is the One who healed you, and we praise God you are alive today, as we had thought you were going to die.”

The patient pointed to the sky and said with a big smile, “Yes, I thank God.”

He wanted to see the evangelist again before discharge, but I’m not sure whether the gentleman came to know the Lord or whether the seeds planted here must germinate longer....

These are the types of experiences that bring so much joy working in this hospital, seeing people encounter not only physical healing but also exposure to the hope of the Gospel.

# U.S. General Surgery residency application

Update on the application process

As most of you know, I am going through the process of applying for a US general surgery residency position.

While it may be acceptable and exceed local standards of care for a surgical-savvy family medicine physician to operate in underserved areas overseas, I believe God has been leading me towards receiving formal US surgical training and credentials since I also hope to train others in the future once equipped myself.

For multiple reasons, it will likely be very challenging to get a position as I’ve already completed a family medicine residency.

I would appreciate your prayers that God would grant favor from program directors reviewing my application and that He would open the door to the residency He would have me equipped at, and make the path clear if this is His will for me.

Programs receive my application September 28<sup>th</sup>, interviews often occur from October through January, and I find out in the middle of March 2023 whether I matched into a program.

At the very least, the Lord has used this journey to launch me immediately overseas after residency while pursuing surgical training, rather than having me work as a family physician in the US for a few years after my training.

His plan is perfect, and it is exciting walking each step in faith as He leads, not knowing the final destination yet.

I would appreciate your prayers for clear direction and open doors!

## Timeline of US General Surgery Residency Application

September 28, 2022	Residency Programs start reviewing applications
October 2022 through January 2023	Interviews are extended to applicants (I am planning to return to the US in mid-November to be available for interviews)
March 2023	Applicants find out whether they matched into a program



# Community...

Ministry within & outside of medicine

I am surrounded by a missionary community with deep love for the Lord, the people here, and for each other.

When I first arrived, I received a paper schedule with several families who had signed up to host me for meals during my first three days here.

What a thoughtful blessing and warm welcome this was to me!

The hospital is set up as a compound where all the missionary houses are together next to the hospital for security, so fellowship has little barrier.

Each month, there is a prayer walk in the morning where the missionaries gather and go from house to house praying for requests submitted by each home, as well as praying for the hospital as we walk by there and for the country of Niger and incoming visitors as we walk by the airstrip.

This has been such a refreshing time of focus on the Lord, and I believe God has poured out blessing and done many mighty things in this place due to the practice of setting aside time to deliberately pray for each other and the ministry here.

There is much I have seen here that I would love to replicate elsewhere if starting a new ministry!

The surgical team is very close-knit with each one desiring to not only provide physical help, but also spiritual hope to patients even with the heavy workload.

I have been extremely blessed not only professionally from what I have been learning from the missionary surgeons, but also spiritually as we pursue the Lord and His glory in this place.

Almost everyone in the missionary community speaks English, but Hausa is the

local language, and the French is the official national language. While our surgical notes are all written in English, the medical and maternity notes are written in French, and only a few nurses know English.

The language barrier has been a struggle as I have longed to have more communication without using a translator, and I have been trying to learn phrases in both Hausa and French (although I am starting to wonder if I should stick to just one of the languages instead of learning some of both...).

I would love to someday be fluent in French to open the door to much of Francophone Africa (many countries in Africa speak French). I would appreciate your prayers that I would have special grace with picking up the language quickly to more easily reach others.

I look forward to the continued stretching and growth the Lord has in store for me here!



*Gathering of the PAACS surgical residents, spouses, and faculty to celebrate the marriage of one of the residents*

## MY BRIEF BIO



As the third of twelve children, I grew up in rural Delaware with both my father and grandfather as physicians. For as long as I can remember, I sensed God calling me into medicine.

I attended college at Bob Jones University and then worked as a 911-response EMT before joining the inaugural class of Liberty University's medical school. I then completed residency at *In His Image* Family Medicine Residency with an area of concentration in advanced obstetrics.

Last year I worked in Malawi, Africa with a brand new Christian general surgery starting through the Pan-African Academy of Christian Surgeons (PAACS). I am now volunteering with a PAACS surgery residency in Niger, West Africa, continuing to improve and expand my surgical skills while applying to general surgery residencies in the US.

My goal is to eventually serve as a surgeon overseas and to start a hospital and program for training up Christian physicians and surgeons to share the hope of the Gospel in underserved areas. I have a heart for ministry within medicine and seeing lives transformed beyond purely physical healing, and am blessed by those of you who have been encouraging and supporting me throughout this journey!

## Pray

- 1) that hearts would be open to the Gospel and that I would provide excellent surgical care
- 2) that God would open the door for me to enter a general surgery residency in the US where I could be well-equipped for His purposes, if it is His will for me to have formal US surgical credentials beyond my family medicine training
- 3) for continued health and safety

## Invest

If you are led to help financially, please write **"David Winston—Niger"** on the check memo line and send to:

In His Image International  
Attn: Stewardship Department  
PO Box 1191  
Tulsa, OK 74101

OR

Donate online at [www.give2ihii.org](http://www.give2ihii.org)  
(please write **"David Winston—Niger"** in the Gift Designation section online).

**DONATE**



**Thank you for reading this long newsletter and for sharing in the appreciation of God's goodness!**

*- David Winston, DO*





⇐ There are small TVs like this scattered throughout the wards, usually 1 per room (which may have 8 to around 20 patient beds per area), which play the Jesus Film in the local language Hausa. Christian music videos also play and Bible stories sharing the Gospel on these TVs.



↑ I flew in this small plane, landing on the hospital's dirt landing strip

(<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=BJUZdBuusBE>)



↑ There are multiple of these huge paintings on the hospital walls with Bible verses. (John 11:25-26 - Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die.")

