



## LINKS UPDATE NOVEMBER 2006

To all the staff at the N and N and those who have expressed an interest in being part of an international link.

### **Visit to Gezira University Hospital, Sudan, 28<sup>th</sup> October - 4<sup>th</sup> November 2006**

by

Nick Astbury, Consultant Ophthalmologist  
Carol Edwards, Deputy Director of Nursing and Education  
Prof Paul Hunter, Professor of Health Protection, UEA  
Sarah Morter, Infection Control Nurse  
Trish Phillips, Links Co-ordinator  
David Prior, Chairman  
Sylvia Watkins, Consultant Physician Rtd, THET



Members of the Links Steering Group have just returned from an exhausting but worthwhile visit to Sudan. The purpose was to identify the needs of Gezira University Hospital (who had initially approached the Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET) requesting a link) and to see what opportunities might exist for our staff to contribute to Sudanese health care.

We found ourselves in a country of 32 million people, about the size of Western Europe, 90% of whom live below the poverty line. Since gaining independence in 1956, parts of the country have been (and still are especially in the Darfur region) ravaged by civil war and despite the benefits of the Nile and potential prosperity from agriculture, minerals and oil, there is a general feeling of neglect.



Although there are now 27 medical schools, mostly in Khartoum, services rapidly decline away from the capital. Gezira, the second city with a population of 3.7 million, is 3 hours drive away. It has a university campus and progressive medical school with much the same philosophy as our own. The faculties have good relations with each other and their focus is very much on the community. That said, the conditions in some of the wards are dreadful (notably paediatrics and obstetrics) where several patients have to share the same bed and where there are no washing facilities or even the most basic hygiene. At the same time there are also some excellent facilities for MRI scanning, radiotherapy and renal dialysis.



The community outreach service depends largely on charity funding and seems to make virtually no impression on the vast numbers of rural people and displaced people who live in the Camps, who suffer from poor hygiene and water quality and are prone to malaria, dysentery, tb, bilharziasis, trypanosomiasis, meningitis, measles, hepatitis and STDs. Malnutrition is still a problem, most acutely in the South, but throughout the country including Gezira.

The over-riding need presented to us was for nurses and nurse training and a visit to the general hospital wards, particularly the paediatric malnutrition ward and diabetic clinic, confirmed this. Nurses are not highly regarded (or paid). Other needs include physiotherapy and rehabilitation (non existent) and requests for specialist training in neurology, infection control, diabetes, ophthalmology, paediatric oncology and foetal medicine.



We found a strong desire on the part of Gezira to take part in joint research into health and sanitation problems of the enormous Gezira Agricultural scheme, comprising over 2 million acres, as well as projects concerned with water quality and communicable disease.

Gezira University Hospital has a lot going for it but there are some enormous gaps and some genuine needs have been identified. During our visit we drew up a 'Memorandum of Understanding' (MOU) that was agreed by the State and Federal Ministers of Health, the Minister for Higher Education and the State Governor, who all made themselves available to meet us.

Thirty years ago the country's infrastructure was probably better than today. There are still few roads in Sudan, rubbish is everywhere and there are many camps for 'displaced persons' that skirt the cities. The government play down the continuing 'problems' in Darfur and in the South, where conditions are infinitely worse than central Sudan.

However Khartoum remains one of the safest cities in the world and we found all the people we met extraordinarily friendly and welcoming.



We think that there is a great opportunity for staff at the N and N and UEA to help improve the healthcare of some of the most impoverished people in Africa, especially in the areas of nurse

training, two way visits and joint research. One specific project, for example, could be to support a scheme to build a play area in the paediatric ward or simply clean up and redecorate wards that are currently unhygienic fly-ridden breeding grounds for infection.

The next step is to share the experiences of our visit with hospital and university staff who might wish to become involved. The MOU makes qualified suggestions for the exchange of medical knowledge, ideas, working practices, technologies and research and does not aim to rope in anyone against their will!

Our photographs will also tell the story and will form a large part of the presentation to all staff that will be arranged as soon as possible, but hopefully on **Monday November 20<sup>th</sup>**. Following that, we need some committed staff to get involved with individual projects and to raise funds for what I think will turn out to be a very worthwhile humanitarian plan that should benefit all concerned.



Nick Astbury

For the Links Steering Group (in alphabetical order!)

Nick Astbury, Consultant Ophthalmologist  
Carol Edwards, Deputy Director of Nursing and Education  
Trisha Drewery, Protocol and Policies Administrator  
Prof Paul Hunter, Professor of Health Protection, UEA  
Prof Sam Leinster, Dean of Medical School, UEA  
Dianne Logan, Ophthalmic Staff Nurse  
Sarah Morter, Infection Control Nurse  
Trish Phillips, Links Co-ordinator  
David Prior, Chairman

# **Memorandum of Understanding**

Between

**The University of Gezira and Wadmedani Teaching Hospital**

and

**The Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital NHS Trust**

This Memorandum of Understanding has the full support of the State Governor of Gezira and the State Minister of Health (following meetings on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2006). The implementation of the links programme will depend upon the support of various parties in the UK including the Tropical Health and Education Trust, the Royal College of Physicians, the staff and Board of the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and the medical faculty of the University of East Anglia.

1. The Faculties of Health Sciences, University of Gezira, the Faculties of Wadmedani Teaching Hospital and the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital NHS Trust agree to develop a link between both organisations to facilitate the exchange of medical knowledge, ideas, working practices, technologies and research. This link will be focussed exclusively on areas where there is a demonstrable health care need; and will be effected by the development of training packages (involving all grades of hospital staff), hospital visits and a programme of joint research.

2. Nursing

Wadmedani Teaching Hospital has identified a lack of formal training for nurses. The Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital will develop a structured training package for general nursing (practical education - basic skills) and specialised nursing (infection control, critical care and diabetes). The training will be designed to deliver two or three training packages in 2007. The training will be delivered by experienced nurses from the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital to local nurses who will be expected to pass on knowledge and skills to their colleagues. Nurses who have a background in nurse education will provide advice and guidance on the development of nursing practice and training.

### 3. Physiotherapy

The Wadmedani Teaching Hospital has identified the lack of a physiotherapy and rehabilitation service (eg for mentally and physically handicapped people, disabled children, amputees or leprosy sufferers) as a priority need. The Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital will explore this with other organisations in the UK and overseas.

### 4. Visits to the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital

The Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital in 2007 will host two groups of up to six staff from Wadmedani Teaching Hospital (subject to the availability of visas) to observe medical, surgical and diagnostic procedures. No invasive procedures or patient contact can be undertaken. These visits will be planned carefully to ensure that the UK practices observed are relevant for the Sudan.

### 5. Visits to Gezira Hospital

When the Wadmedani Teaching Hospital identifies a particular service weakness requiring either medical or surgical interventions or teaching/training, the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital will try to identify the relevant expertise. This might include for example:

- neurology
- paediatric oncology
- diabetes
- ophthalmology (see 6 below)
- laparoscopic surgery
- foetal medicine

It is envisaged that in 2007 there will be at least two visits each lasting between one and two weeks including a teaching visit by an experienced neurologist.

### 6. Ophthalmology

A number of specific needs have been identified in ophthalmology and include:

- Training in sub-specialty areas - eg squint, diabetic retinopathy, vitreo-retinal disease
- Diabetic screening
- Management of glaucoma
- Management of advanced corneal disease and corneal grafting

- Rehabilitation for blind people
- Provision of a low vision service

These needs can be progressed through the VISION 2020 links programme facilitated by the International Centre for Eye Health.

#### 7. Joint research and teaching

The Gezira University Hospital, the University of East Anglia and the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital will design, conduct and evaluate joint research into the health and sanitation problems experienced by the Worker's Camps associated with the Gezira Agricultural Project as well as projects concerned with water quality and communicable disease.

Other collaborative research will be identified. Both universities are particularly interested in investigating the possibility of support for postgraduate research projects.

Further links and collaboration with the University of East Anglia School of Medicine, Health Policy and Practice will be encouraged. This may include elective exchanges.

#### 8. Community Health

The two hospitals are keen to develop joint projects in primary care and preventative medicine (Health Protection). There is a need for both epidemiology and health economics postgraduate training linked to field work. The University of East Anglia and the University of Gezira will deliver a course aimed at public health professionals and Ministry of Health staff.

#### 9. Laboratory Services

The Wadmedani Teaching Hospital has identified a specific need for improved laboratory services to support both clinical and public health, for example, improved diagnosis of enteric pathogens and renal pathology. The Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital will work to identify and support these initiatives.

#### 10. Other activities

From time to time the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital will support individual projects, for example a play area for malnourished children or improved accommodation in the paediatric ward. Other areas include instrument repair, the sourcing or maintenance of high quality second-hand equipment and telemedicine. It may also be possible to organise a small

group of elective medical and nursing students to undertake a specific project to improve the patient environment of particular parts of Wadmedani Teaching Hospital.

## 11. Financing

The Wadmedani Teaching Hospital and the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital will pay all their local costs arising from this Links programme. Thus the costs of the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital staff will be met by Wadmedani Teaching Hospital from the point of arrival in Sudan and until departure and the cost of Wadmedani Teaching Hospital staff will be met by the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital Trust from the point of their arrival at Norwich Airport. Acquisition of visas for Sudan will be supported by the Wadmedani Teaching Hospital and visas for the UK will be supported by the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital.

All the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital staff participating in this programme will be volunteers and will not be paid by the hospital. Their costs will be met by fund-raising and charitable donations. The Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital is not permitted to use NHS money to fund overseas projects.

The costs of this proposal are likely to be in the order of £20,000 - £50,000 in the first year, perhaps doubling in the second year. We are confident, but cannot guarantee to secure this funding. If we are able to secure sufficient finance, it may be possible for the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital staff to take paid (professional) leave to support this programme.

The research projects will be funded separately by grants from appropriate organisations such as the WHO.

## 12. Duration, evaluation and co-ordination

The link between the Wadmedani Teaching Hospital and the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital will begin from January 2007 and last for an initial three year period, with annual evaluation. In October 2009 each hospital will decide whether to extend the link for a further period.

Each Hospital will establish a Steering Group to coordinate the links programme comprising the following:

For the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital NHS Trust:

- Nick Astbury, Consultant Ophthalmologist and immediate past President Royal College of Ophthalmologists (lead)
- Carol Edwards, Deputy Director of Nursing and Education
- Professor Paul Hunter, Professor of Health Protection, University of East Anglia
- Sarah Morter, Infection Control Nurse
- Trish Phillips Senior Physiotherapist (retired) and Link Co-ordinator
- David Prior, Chairman
- Sylvia Watkins, Consultant Physician (retired) representing the Tropical Health and Education Trust

For Wadmedani Teaching Hospital:

- Professor Osman Khalafalla Saeed, Dean Faculty of Medicine-University of Gezira
- Professor Ali Babiker Habour, Deputy Dean Faculty of Medicine-University of Gezira
- Dr Hashim Eltom, Consultant Physician
- Dr Samira Hamid, Consultant Community Medicine
- Dr Kamal Osman, Consultant Physician
- Dr Sayed Mustafa Elbushra, Consultant Physician
- Dr Hassan Ali Musa, Consultant Surgeon
- Dr Mohamed Elhassan Abdalla, Paediatrics Department

13. Signatures

This Memorandum of Understanding is signed on behalf of the Gezira Ministry of Health, The University of Gezira, the

Wadmedani Teaching Hospital and the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital NHS Trust by the following:

Dr Abdulmagid Mohamed Nour, Minister of Health for Gezira State on behalf of the Ministry of Health

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Professor Osman Khalafalla Saeed, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, on behalf of the University of Gezira and Wadmedani Teaching Hospital

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Prof. Ali Babiker Ali Habour, Deputy Dean and Director General of Wadmedani Teaching Children's Hospital

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David Prior, Chairman of the Norfolk and Norwich University NHS Hospital Trust

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Nick Astbury, Consultant Ophthalmologist, Norwich University NHS Hospital Trust

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Carol Edwards, Deputy Director of Nursing and Education, Norwich University NHS Hospital Trust

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Professor Paul Hunter, Professor of Health Protection,  
University of East Anglia

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Sarah Morter, Senior Infection Control Nurse, Norwich  
University NHS Hospital Trust

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Trish Phillips, Links Programme Co-ordinator and Senior  
Physiotherapist

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Sylvia Watkins, Consultant Physician (retired) representing  
the Tropical Health and Education Trust

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Dated November 1<sup>st</sup> 2006