



Links Manual

A guide to starting up and maintaining health partnerships

- THET (tropical health education trust) 2005
- Download as a PDF file at www.thet.org
- £3.50 pb

A recent article in *BMJ Careers* highlighted the launch of NHS Links (career-focus.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/330/7488/78). Set up in collaboration with THET, it aims to establish a network of doctors and health professionals involved in a variety of health links between NHS Trusts and health centres in less developed countries. It aims to encourage and support the spread of such links in NHS hospitals and Primary Care Trusts and raise awareness about global health.

THET produced this excellent handbook to coincide with the launch. It contains the information you need to establish such a link. A foreword by Sir Nigel Crisp, chief executive for the NHS (England), commends and encourages the involvement of NHS staff in such work.

A fundamental principle behind every link, described in the introduction, is 'to respond to the requests, and work towards the goals, of those responsible for healthcare' in the overseas situation. The writer points out how a link based in a NHS Trust can be far more effective in the longer term than the work of a single individual, but goes on to emphasise that 'long term institutional involvement and commitment are necessary on both sides of the link'.

The booklet describes the benefits to the UK institution, the individual and the overseas hospital and gives practical advice on how to make a success of a link. It lists action points to follow through and

includes thumbnail sketches of those who have already established successful links. There are sample job descriptions for a

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Link Co-ordinator; examples of presentations to inspire your board and bring them onside; points to consider when preparing to go on an overseas trip and in preparing to receive someone from overseas visiting your hospital, together with tips on fundraising, budgeting, booking flights etc.

For those who could get excited about the possibility of making a worthwhile contribution to overseas healthcare, while continuing to work in the NHS, this booklet is a must. It contains a wealth of practical detail with little left to the imagination. Once you have read it, you will have no excuse not to get involved!

Peter Armon is CMF Overseas Support Secretary



What can I Do?

The HIV/AIDS ministry of Gideon Byamugisha

- FB productions, 50 minutes
- Video £16, DVD £20, Leader's guide £2
- Available in the UK through TALC at www.talcuk.org

An ordained minister in the Church of Uganda, Canon Gideon Byamugisha discovered in the early nineties that he was HIV positive after his wife suddenly died of an AIDS related illness. Coping with grief and shock, he found a calling to challenge the church and society in its response to AIDS and to offer support to those with HIV. After becoming the first African clergyman to come out openly as HIV positive in the mid nineties, Byamugisha found himself in demand across Africa and the world.

He now works for World Vision and seeks to bring a message to the church that it needs to respond positively to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This video, produced by the Strategies for Hope Trust and the Friends of Canon Gideon Foundation is an attempt to get that message across to a wider audience. As an introduction to the man and the issues, it is a good resource that could be used in most churches.

Gideon comes over as a genuine, godly man seeking to challenge stigma, get over a clear message about prevention, and to encourage a compassionate response from Christians. But it is no more than an introduction – skimming over prevention issues, not even looking at the access to treatment issue, or at how the western church has largely blanked the issue of AIDS. Gideon is seen talking to audiences in Africa, but not to western congregations (although he has spoken to

British churches). The African churches have dealt with HIV far more than those here in the UK, and with good reason – they have had no choice!

The video is perhaps strongest in tackling the issue of stigma, and at showing a compassionate response to HIV positive people within the local church. As a resource this is a good video to use with church youth groups, a home group or any small meeting. It is broken down into fourteen bite sized chapters, and a study guide is available. But it is no more than a starter, and Gideon is not the

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strongest of communicators. His message about 'ABC plus' prevention is sound, but not clearly expressed and could easily confuse those not familiar with the issue.

Worth getting hold of if you want to get people thinking about the issues, but there are more useful resources out there if people want to go deeper.

For example, *The Truth About AIDS* by Patrick Dixon, available from ACET International at www.acet-international.org (free for use in developing nations).

Steve Fouch is CMF Allied Professions Secretary