

medic to medic

Pete Mackley describes an initiative to help medical students in the developing world

A first year lecturer once solemnly impressed upon me how fortunate and privileged I was to be receiving a medical education. How many able students in the developing world would give their back teeth for the chances I had been given? As a nervous first year, I wondered whether this wasn't wasted talk as I was sure I wouldn't get the grades and would be out within a year! Yet here I am four years later, having benefited from comprehensive medical education and with every prospect of finishing the course. My fellow students and I have been truly blessed to reach this point and all too often we don't remember it.

Medic to Medic¹ is a charity born out of an elective experience of the realities of medical education in the developing world. It recognises the opportunities that we've been given as UK medical students and seeks to alleviate the inequalities amongst our fellow students in the developing world. The charity employs the familiar 'sponsor a person' method, but instead of a child or a family we are given

the opportunity to sponsor a medical student through medical school. Medic to Medic currently operates in Malawi and Tanzania, and is looking to expand its work into India and Sri Lanka in the near future.

Many in the West blame a lack of national doctors in developing countries on the so called 'brain drain' or exodus of these professionals to richer countries. Yet according to the World Health Organisation, sub-Saharan Africa is simply not generating enough doctors to supply a minimum standard of health care regardless of the brain drain.² As Medic to Medic has found, the talent and ambition exists, but the resources are often lacking.

Out of all those in the west, medical students should be best placed to relate to a prospective student, every bit as bright or able as ourselves, but unable to enter medical school because of a matter of £9 a month. It makes us see how privileged we are that such barriers do not stop us from entering or indeed graduating from medical school. Donating to Medic to Medic

represents investment in a long term future for developing countries. While short term solutions to medical crises are clearly vital, ensuring these countries eventually have the required local doctors to provide for their own medical needs will clearly take considerable time and effort. Faced with this task as a small charity, Medic to Medic could be said to be just a drop in the ocean, but it is a step in the right direction.

The Bible exhorts us to care for the poor and provide for those in need.³ Often we are willing but overwhelmed by the sheer volume of global poverty. Medic to Medic provides a way in which we can help those with whom we have so much in common and with whom we can perhaps best empathise.

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REFERENCES

1. www.medictomedic.org.uk
2. www.who.int/whr/2006/en
3. Matthew 25:35-40