

an amazing opportunity

Laura Seymour shares her experience at a Kenyan Christian medical conference

I heard about the CMDA Kenya National Student Conference through an email from CMF encouraging people to attend if they were in East Africa during their elective. I felt that it would be a great start to my placement in Rwanda, putting God at the forefront of the whole experience. I also wanted to support students in Africa, have fellowship with them, and learn about what being a Christian medic means for them.

In heavy rains, my journey from the airport took three times as long as it should have - despite the fact that the driver spent most of the journey on the pavements, forcing hordes of pedestrians to stumble out of the way. All I can say is that God protected me - and all the other road-users we could have knocked into!

After a warm welcome from some of the organisers (and some *ugali* - maize meal), I heard the first talk of the conference on Friday night. The theme was 'being called to be faithful servants' (Matthew 25:21); the speaker, Pastor Tony Kiama, was extremely engaging and entertaining in his exposition - so much so that there was a constant ripple of laughter - which I found very refreshing! I also met three other very friendly students from the UK (Mo, James and Su-Ann - all doing their electives in Kenya) who had also made the trip to the conference.

Saturday morning's praise and worship was such a beautiful time - the way the hymns (in both English and Kiswahili) started off softly and gradually built to a powerful crescendo - was absolutely wonderful. There was swaying



and clapping, and a sense of joy that can only come from the Lord!

A talk on 1 Samuel 16 was followed by a moving testimony from Dr Florence Muindi, who has been part of *Life in Abundance* international ministry for the past 25 years, serving in eight African countries, Haiti and Jamaica. The crux of her message was about surrender - and challenged us to consider whether we have truly surrendered our lives to Christ. She also reiterated Pastor Kiama's exhortation about the power of prayer, and dared us not to be satisfied with small miracles.

Following a break for chai, we headed off to our chosen seminars. I chose 'medical missions' with Dr Muindi, which was a fascinating insight - please google '*Life in Abundance international*' if you would like more information!

My next seminar was on 'relationships' - always a popular topic at conferences! We were split into gender groups, and asked to come up with five traits to look for in a potential spouse. The outcome of the boys' group was hilarious - number one was that the girl must be beautiful, number two submissive, and number three was



Laura Seymour is a clinical medical student in Sheffield



Pastor Kiama's talk wrapped up the theme of serving and faithfulness, concluding that God does desire us to be faithful servants, but that in the 'doing'

we shouldn't lose sight of our eternal destiny. Finally, the organising committee gave their farewells, with gifts for the various committee members. A student kindly offered to put me up for the night with her family in a small settlement outside of the city. Her hospitality and generosity were such a blessing as I travelled on to begin my elective - praise God!

that she should be a good cook! Somehow the notion that women in the 21st century should not be regarded as chattels had escaped them, it would appear! After looking at the Bible, however, we came to a consensus on some of the issues, and resolved that there is no perfect partner.

I chose 'healing versus treating' for the third seminar, and was enormously encouraged hearing a doctor's testimony about how God had used him during his medical career. The message was that we're all mandated to practise in what he called 'divine therapeutics' - we all have the ability to pray for the sick - so we should!

Sunday morning started with praise and worship (again very moving); a word of thanks from me on behalf of the UK students, a testimony from Mo, and then the closing talks. The first was on 'becoming a spiritual diagnostician' by a US consultant in family medicine and HIV specialist. She emphasised the need to pray before every patient encounter in order to reveal any additional hurts that need healing - sometimes easier said than done - but I'll endeavour to do it!

reflection

Looking back, I remember most the wonderfully warm welcome that I received from the organisers and the delegates. No matter where we come from in the world, as brothers and sisters in Christ, we have this amazing bond that really does transcend cultural differences!

I have been emboldened by the faith of the students that I met, and now feel even more encouraged to reflect back to my patients and colleagues the love that God has shown to me.

Attending a conference like this whilst on elective is an amazing opportunity! It blesses those you visit, and is a real eye-opener into the lives of Christian medics around the world. It's also a huge blessing personally; you meet new people, try new food, share your love of God, and learn from others. It's a great opportunity to dedicate some time to praise and worship, prayer, and the Word, which reinforces the fact that God is sovereign and underpins our practice as medical students wherever we are in the world. ■