

# crossing cultures

Amelia Bearn reports on her elective in Ghana



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**A**pril 2016. I stepped onto the plane at Heathrow not knowing what to expect in Ghana. Having come straight out of finals I had barely opened a guide book, but I quickly discovered that Ghana is hot (very hot) all the time and that dust gets everywhere (don't wear white).

My elective was at The King's Medical Centre, a small rural mission hospital in Northern Ghana. I learnt so much medically, but also about God's heart for his world.

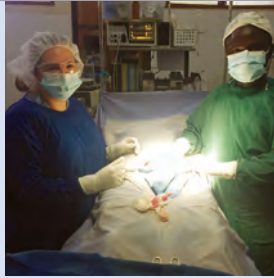
### act justly

A 76-year-old lady presented very unwell with severe abdominal pain. She was deeply jaundiced with an unusual mass below the liver edge. I suggested some liver function tests, but the hospital doesn't have the equipment, and the patient couldn't afford to send the sample to another laboratory. An ultrasound scan by a visiting American doctor showed a grossly enlarged gallbladder displaced by the inflamed liver. In the UK she would have had a CT scan or perhaps gone straight to surgery, but here she was simply sent home.

I was unsettled when so much more would have been done for her at home; it felt so unfair. How can we complain about the state of the NHS when such healthcare inequalities exist? How can we bring justice to these situations?

### love mercy

Every day started with staff devotions, which were so refreshing as we focused on God and



worshipped him. I loved how the security guards in the hospital were part of the team, ensuring patients got into the wards safely and running for help if anything was needed. My time there helped me to see how valued every single person is to God, both staff and patients. As their doctor, I am called to treat them as Jesus would, not as the world sees them.

### walk humbly

One week I joined the church pastors to visit a rural village. We were soon being served traditional Ghanaian food from one large pot that we all shared from. This apparently shows the trust you have for those you eat with. I was overwhelmed that a family who had barely anything wanted to serve us and provide us with a meal.

Their basic way of living made me start to realise how much we complicate our lives with social media, television and emails. We rarely spend time eating, talking and laughing with those we love. I believe God created us to have simple lives, where we love him and we love people.

After seven weeks I was ready to stay forever! I learnt so much medically, from hernia repairs to antenatal ultrasounds. But I also learnt more of God's heart, and let my heart break for what breaks his. As I start work in the NHS I hope not to lose the lessons I learnt in Ghana.

*'What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly'* (Micah 6:8). ■