

international medical mission

Vicky Lavy describes an urgent need





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Endocrinology. You know, a subspecialty that a few will pursue, but most won't. Sadly, that is how many people see medical mission. But is that how God is calling us to think?

what's the problem?

The vast majority of the world live in low or middle income countries (LMICs). In the UK we enjoy a standard of living, level of education and quality of healthcare that most of the world will never experience. Indeed, the vast majority of deaths and disabilities due to treatable diseases occur in LMICs where there are fewest resources – and doctors.

Here are some incredible statistics. It has been estimated that in sub-Saharan Africa, 3% of the world's health workforce care for 10% of the world's population bearing 24% of the global disease burden, with less than 1% of global health expenditure.¹ In addition, LMICs see 99% of maternal deaths, 95% of HIV infections, 90% of people with visual impairment... the list goes on.²

why medical mission as a Christian?

Throughout the Bible we read of Jesus' care for the vulnerable and downtrodden; over 300 passages speak about his concern for justice and his heart for the poor. We see that he calls us to 'make disciples of all nations.'³ This means that both evangelism and social action are part of God's all-encompassing mission to restore the whole of creation.

When Jesus explained what he had come to do, he described a holistic mission; bringing the good news of the gospel, restoring broken people, and bringing justice in broken

communities.⁴ The exciting thing is that he chooses to use his people to accomplish this mission. Jesus said 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you'.⁵

Christian doctors and nurses are part of the plan, bringing God's love to a needy world through competent, compassionate healthcare. In one sense, we are called to do 'medical mission' wherever we are. We are sent by God into a broken world to play a part in its restoration, both through our medical skills and as we share the good news of God's love when there is opportunity – living and speaking for Jesus both at home and away.

God asks his people to care for the poor, and to work for justice. He doesn't call all of us to live and work in a poor country. But he does call all of us to be engaged.

what can I do as a student?

So as a medical or nursing student, how can you begin to think about getting involved from the off? Here are some thoughts:

develop relationships

The best way to do this is to develop a passion for prayer. Pray, perhaps through *Operation World*,⁶ for the nations. But also develop relationships with medical missionaries so you can pray for and with them. CMF has over 250 members living and working overseas. Why not read their blogs and newsletters, or even write to them yourself? You can also pray and develop relationships with students and healthcare professionals around the world through our connection with over 80 Christian medical movements through the International Christian Medical and Dental Association (ICMDA).

attend a course

CMF run a number of courses to help medics and nurses engage in medical mission. For example, *Who is my Neighbour?* explores medical mission and international work. This can be organised by your local CMF group.

The yearly Developing Health Course equips doctors, nurses and allied health professionals for work in resource-poor settings. This is an excellent opportunity to connect with others and grow in knowledge, skill and experience.

read about it

We've published some short, readable guides:

- *Short-Term Medical Work* outlines practice guidelines for short visits
- *The Working Abroad Handbook* is a comprehensive guide to working overseas
- *The Electives Handbook* is a terrific resource for medical students
- *Off the Beaten Track* offers advice for juniors on how to go overseas soon after qualification

go

As well as numerous short-term options throughout your studies, an elective to a developing country is a golden opportunity to do something different, to see life and medicine in another setting, and to look at the world from a different perspective. For many students, it's an experience that changes the way they live, and shapes their future.

Deciding what to do, where to go and how to get there can seem a daunting task but CMF has lots of resources to help.

The CMF website contains a database of over 80 Christian hospitals around the world that accept elective students and inspiring elective reports from former students.

Who is my Neighbour?



How can we respond to the enormous needs we see in other parts of the world? Both now, and as future healthcare professionals, we can play a vital part in bringing God's love and care to some of the poorest people in the world. Come along and be equipped to go, give, pray, partner, teach and train.

how will you be involved?

We are all called to engage in global mission, be it through going, giving, praying or simply being informed. Indeed, the history of medical missions shows that medical and nursing missionaries have always been at the forefront of changes in medical science and practice.⁷

The opportunities that lie ahead are numerous.⁸ The world needs committed, God-honouring, well-trained medics and nurses who are prepared to live out transformed lives for the sake of the gospel. Let's support each other, asking God to use our gifts throughout our training and wherever we end up in the future as we join him on his mission in a hurting world. ▶

Find our international resources at:
www.cmf.org.uk/international

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