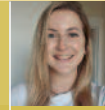


# my trip to... UMH, Nepal

Annika Wilder-Smith reports on CMF's Elective Lite



Annika Wilder-Smith is a medical student in Edinburgh

**W**hat did you do this weekend? I travelled to Nepal for my medical elective – from my living room.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting restrictions, it is likely that my medical elective will be cancelled this year. In normal circumstances, CMF would help connect us with Christian organisations and hospitals to organise our electives with. Fortunately, CMF was able to offer an alternative option, Elective Lite, which gave us a taste of medical mission abroad. This took place on Zoom in early September.

It was a privilege to join five other medical and nursing students on a virtual trip to Tansen, Nepal to meet some of the United Mission Hospital team. Due to the time difference, the programme was split over two half-days. On the first morning, we had introductions and a morning devotional, followed by a tour around the hospital and accommodation. It felt like we had arrived at the mission site ourselves and were personally guided around the grounds.

In our first tea break, we were shown how to make the local chai tea so we could also taste and smell the life in Nepal. Afterwards, we broke into small groups for discussion about cross-cultural communication and difficulties in cultural differences. It opened my eyes to the reality and practicality of being flexible and amenable in order to appropriately adapt to a new setting. We were able to explore this in greater depth with a question and answer session with the team.

I was particularly touched by a metaphor used by one of the missionaries, who humbly described her experience of mission as being like a single thread carefully interwoven into a beautiful tapestry. While individually we may not feel particularly significant in mission work, ultimately God knows the greater perspective, as he designed the final tapestry. We therefore are merely the medium in which the many threads of his disciples are woven together for God's ultimate purpose.



On the second day we received some medical teaching from Dr Les Dornon who highlighted some of the main medical presentations we would encounter in Nepal. This allowed us to get involved in ward rounds and case presentation discussion. It was fascinating to hear about the differences in disease burden, such as high rates of organophosphorus poisoning, psychiatric presentations and infectious diseases. I was especially moved by the compassion shown by the team at United Mission Hospital, who use a holistic approach towards their patients, considering the social and financial impact of treatment on their lives as a whole, in particular, not only treating those who could not afford to pay, but also paying for their food and transport home. This reminded me of the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

For lunch, we saw a video of traditional Nepalese street food, after which we were led by one of the missionaries in a worship service for the missionary team. The elective experience was then closed with a panel discussion and opportunity for questions.

The two days of Elective Lite were inspiring and motivating, and helped to better understand the blessings and challenges of medical mission. This time of fellowship demonstrated God's faithfulness as he works through the constraints and limitations of current circumstances to gather disciples from all across the world to worship him. ■