

A young child is crying intensely, with their face buried in their hands. They are being held by a woman in a white tank top. A healthcare worker wearing white gloves is examining the child's leg, which has several small, open sores. The scene is set in a simple, possibly outdoor or semi-outdoor, environment. The image is overlaid with several semi-transparent orange circles of varying sizes. In the top left corner, there is a circular graphic made of black dots with the word "global" inside. On the right side, there is a large semi-transparent orange circle containing the text "global healthcare mission" and a smaller paragraph below it. In the bottom left corner, there is a small circular graphic with the number "20" inside.

global

global healthcare mission

Vicky Lavy describes
an urgent need

what's the problem?

The vast majority of people in 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, most deaths and disabilities due to treatable diseases occur in LMICs where there are fewest resources – and healthcare workers.

Here are some incredible statistics. It has been estimated that in sub-Saharan Africa, three per cent of the world's health workforce care for ten per cent of the world's population bearing 24 per cent of the global disease burden, with less than one per cent of global health expenditure.¹ In addition, LMICs see 99 per cent of maternal deaths, 95 per cent of HIV infections, 90 per cent 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. There are over 300 passages that 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 nurses and midwives 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 'healthcare mission' wherever we are. God sends us into a broken world to play a part in its restoration, both through our clinical skills and as we share the good news of God's love when there is the 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 developing country. But he does call all of us to be engaged with the issues and the needs.

what can I do as a student?

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

1. 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 around 200 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 qualified nurses and midwives through our partner organisation, Nurses Christian Fellowship International (see *ncfi.org*). Also, check out the CMF International Facebook Group, open to all CMF members at facebook.com/groups/CMF.International for discussions and information on global health issues and resources.

2. attend a course

CMF runs several courses to help health professionals engage with global healthcare mission. For example, consider being a participant on CMF's Global Track, aimed at encouraging thought and experience for students and newly qualified health workers to explore working long-term in overseas healthcare settings (see cmf.org.uk/global/global-track) Who is my neighbour now? is a day conference exploring global health and mission.

The annual Developing Health Course equips health professionals for work in resource-poor settings. Visit cmf.org.uk/global for details of all these courses and events.

3. read about it

We've published some short, readable guides:

- *The Electives Handbook* – a terrific resource for students. cmf.org.uk/global/global-resources-books
- *Off the Beaten Track* – a guide written for junior doctors but with lots of useful general advice.
- *Short-term Medical Work* – for all health professionals on short trips.

All our resources can be found at cmf.org.uk/global/globalresources

4. 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 nursing or midwifery in another setting, and 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.

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, nursing, and midwife missionaries have always been at the forefront of changes in medical science and practice.⁷

The world needs committed, God-honouring, well-trained healthcare workers 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. 🙏

Vicky Lavv served as a medical missionary in Malawi and led CMF's Global Mission ministry until 2016

1. WHO, 2016
2. WHO, 2014
3. Matthew 28:19
4. Luke 4:18-19
5. John 20:21
6. Operation World. operationworld.org
7. Knowles R. The Christian contribution to healthcare. *Nucleus*. Freshers' Edition 2016:52-55