

Reflection report (LAMB Hospital)

God has planted the heart of mission and medicine for quite a number of years. I have longed for going an overseas attachment to explore my direction since I knew there was an elective period in our syllabus. Under pandemic, I faced a lot of pressure and challenges. However, thinking that it might be my last chance to leave Hong Kong for 1 month these few years, I still applied for the clinical attachment in LAMB Hospital, Bangladesh. I had two expectation before I went to Bangladesh, exploring medical mission and experiencing God. I hoped that it was worth going even if I risked my study because of not being able to come back due to COVID.

LAMB Hospital is situated in the poorest district in Bangladesh. It is famous to the local people for being a missionary hospital which offers good quality of service with low price to the poor. Many Bangladeshi patients travelled long to LAMB Hospital to seek medical help. They have 4 department, Medicine, Paediatrics, Surgery, and Obstetrics & Gynaecology. I had chances to rotate all the 4 departments and spent the latter half of my time in Surgery. Within my stay, I knew more about the medical system in Bangladesh and the operation of the hospital.

In Bangladesh, most of the resources are centralized in Dhaka. In other places, including the district where LAMB Hospital is located, are lack of resources and manpower. The salary in Dhaka is higher and most of the specialty trainings are only provided in Dhaka. It is therefore difficult to keep experienced local doctors here. Owing to the lack of resources, sometimes they have to send the patient to other hospitals or send the specimen to Dhaka for further investigation, such as histopathology. Despite all these difficulties the doctors in LAMB need to face, they still try hard to provide the best healthcare services to the poor here. For instance, they used their creativity to make use of the material nearby as a substitute, such as the Eppendorf tube from lab for dilating bowel in children. They also tried to cut the unnecessary investigations so that the patient did not have to pay a lot. The managements here sometimes were therefore quite different from those in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, there were still some cases that there was not much they could do. Because of the poverty, patients here usually delay their visits until the health problems affect their lives significantly. By the time they came, the diseases were usually quite severe. Some patients who were suspected or diagnosed to have cancer refuse to perform further investigation or receive treatments because of poverty. The only thing the doctors could do was to send them off or provide palliative care to try to relieve their symptoms.

When I was shadowing the Surgery team, there was a very impressive case. A young man who was around 20 years old came with a very large tumour on his left thigh and two big tumour over his chest. He was diagnosed with neurofibroma. The tumour on his thigh was big enough to nearly touch the ground and it affected his life. His family and him went to Dhaka to seek for a surgery excision of the tumour but then left because of the unaffordable cost. They came to LAMB as their last hope. My mentor, Dr Antje, a Dutch Surgeon and another local junior doctor performed 2-day surgeries with each longer than 10 hours to excise the big tumour

over his thigh. I was impressed by the humanitarian work they performed to this desperate young man. From what I observed, Christian doctors here live their lives like Jesus to bless the people here. Apart from the patients, other local doctors, who are Muslim or Hindu, can also feel that the atmosphere in LAMB Hospital are different from other hospital. They think it is like a friendly environment that the senior doctors are so nice and willing to teach the juniors. To some of them, it is like a big family. I saw how the foreign missionary doctors tried to raise and train the local doctors here. I was blessed by shadowing the local doctors here too. It was a joy to be part of them and get to know some of them.

In this trip, God taught me the power of prayers and faith. One of the prayers I received before the trip was stepping into the water because of no fear in love. Before I went there, I knew how strict the flight ban could be and the consequence could have been deferring my study if I had not come back before Specialty Clerkship. I was a bit worried in my way to an unfamiliar country alone under COVID situation. When all are the things that you cannot control, the only thing you can do is to pray. "God who brought you here can bring you back." This was one of the prayers for me. I knew that many people prayed for my trip, such as the people in LAMB, the people in my church and many other Christians who knew I went there. All these prayers strengthened my faith. My Specialty Clerkship started in mid-March. The old policy needed me to have 3-week quarantine plus 1-week self-monitoring. At the last week of January, I was supposed to leave LAMB. Yet, my flight was cancelled but it was a blessing in disguise. I was thankful that I could rebook all the quarantine hotel and flight ticket, which were usually fully booked. After the day back to Hong Kong was postponed, the government then changed the policy to shorten the quarantine period into 2 weeks. I could therefore get a refund of 1-week quarantine hotel room and also enjoy my extended stay in LAMB. In my way back to Hong Kong, I even encountered the problems of the PCR test and flight delay but all these were solved with favours. I knew the prayers were those which brought me back to Hong Kong safely.

As a short-termer, I might not be able to help much, but I could meet great people here who were passionate for Jesus. Just after I arrived LAMB, I prayed to ask what God wanted me to experience here. The message I got was God's love. During my stay, I was always amazed by the sincerity of the people here. In the first two weeks, I met an American family in the guesthouse. They made me feel so welcome and showed me how a family was like. In January, they had a welcoming party for junior doctors. I did not show up because I thought I was just passing through. Next day, many of the local doctors asked me why I did not come and said "We miss you so much. You are part of us this month!" It really impressed me and made me regret for my mindset of not bothering the others. When I shared my worries and troubles for going back to Hong Kong, many people here cared for me and showed their support. A Korean family even prayed for my way back home every day. Even if I said I was worried that I would get stuck in Dhaka because of the flight delay, my mentor said "We won't let you get stuck in Dhaka. We'll bring you back". In my last week there, many people were sick and everyone tried to avoid me so that I would not get COVID and could leave safely. When I was sad that I did not meet many of them before I left, they came to see me off from a distance when I left. It really surprised me and I literally cried for my whole way to the airport. There were still countless precious moments that could not be mentioned all here. I was touched

by their heart and care, which broke my mindset that it was impossible to build a true relationship within a short time. They will be the people I miss and I hope I can have chance to meet them again one day.

One of the people here told me that when you finish what God calls you to do, it is a success. It should not be judged by its result. In this trip, I did not really serve people a lot because of time restriction and language barrier. Nonetheless, I had a spiritual encounter there to experience God and also the culture of His Kingdom. The work God did for me is much more than I asked and imagined.