



My Medical Mission Experience – CASEC Medical Mission to Cameroon, June 2016

By Gladys

This medical mission is by far the highlight of my year!! I have volunteered many times in the US in health outreach programs but this time it was so different because of the response and the number of people who showed up. Being in triage was really very appropriate and awesome for an advance practice nurse like me because I got to use all the skills and knowledge acquired throughout my 16 year nursing career in the USA, as an RN and now APRN (Advanced Practice RN).

I saw most of the patients that came in. Some came in for screenings only and others because of an ongoing medical/physical problem. I was very impressed by the way we were able to orient most people to the right specialties based on the signs and symptoms presented.

Some people responded really well to the dietary advice given to improve their hypertension or diabetes by verbalizing understanding of instructions. In addition, some people were so grateful like a lady who had on a blue outfit who said she followed us everywhere. She took my number and insisted to give me some groundnuts (peanuts) and yams from her farm to show her gratitude. I never got to meet her afterwards; we just talked on the phone.

I was able to also explain to some patients how to take their medications and how to use their patches as well as pain meds. Reinforcement is key. Some of them did not remember the instructions and guidance given to them at the pharmacy, and some couldn't read. The pharmacy team uses a very easy generic dispensing labeling system that uses a filled in circle to represent a pill. After helping in the pharmacy department a couple of times, I have a new appreciation of Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians (no joke). I was fortunate to float to other department after triage was closed. I got to do teaching and clarifications in GYN as well as help to explain medications prescribed and instructions given in other departments. I saw the relief in many people's faces after I had reinforced and explained when and how they were supposed to take their meds or when to follow up on exams as well as why they needed to do so. I also love the way all teams collaborated well and how the volunteers communicated with each other.

The medical mission offered me an opportunity to use my skills, to teach and to reinforce several basic health concepts. I also made many new friends. I will definitely do it again next year. It was challenging but very rewarding.

Thanks.