



My Medical Mission Experience –

By Linda

2016 was my second time volunteering with the Patcha Foundation. My experience from 2015 left me wanting more. I knew I had more to offer and I wanted to make a bigger difference. When I returned to the US after my first trip in 2015, I encouraged my medical colleagues to join me on the 2016 mission trip. As a result, Howard University students and alumni were well represented in the 2016 Patcha Foundation mission trip. Howard University has a home within the Patcha Foundation. I thank the foundation for allowing us to practice our medical craft. The Foundation has helped me more in more ways than I could have possibly helped them.

Serving in the Mission has shown me how to be a more compassionate doctor. The mission has showed me the social injustices within healthcare and public health. One patient in particular, further illustrated this to me. She explained to me that she had awakened at 4:00am, walked 1 hour to the main road to catch a taxi, and rode in the taxi for another hour to arrive at the hospital. Arriving at the hospital at 6:00am, she waited in line for another 4 hours before it was finally her turn to be seen. She had heard a radio advertisement saying that people were coming to her village from the United States to “help people not be sick anymore”. She had end-stage breast cancer that had already spread to the lymph nodes. It broke my heart that we had to tell her that we could not help her “not be sick anymore”. The only thing that could be done was to give her palliative medicines to alleviate some of her pain. The anguish and sadness that filled her eyes were unbearable.

How could these doctors not fix me?--I imagined that’s what she was thinking. When asked why she waited so long before seeing a doctor, she responded that it was too expensive and too far. Keep in mind, a typical general consultation in Cameroon starts at about 20 US dollars while Ob/GYN consultations range from \$30 to \$50. This mother of four was not receiving her yearly breast exams, which is the standard care for women over the age of 40 (in the United States). Four children will now soon be without a mother, all because she did not have the level of care that we are so fortunate to have here in the United States.

I am writing this testimony to encourage people to donate to the Patcha Foundation. Even just \$1 goes a long way. A medical consultation in Cameroon is less than \$20 and still, the majority of people cannot afford it. The Patcha Foundation consults more than 4000 people every year, for FREE. They cannot do it alone. It is through the generous donations of sponsors and volunteers like me that this is all possible, so I encourage others to help out if they can.

I thank MMPF for granting me the opportunity to touch so many lives. My wish is to continue to work with the Foundation and continue to make a difference in Cameroon. The more screenings we can do, the more lives we can save. The more screenings we do, the fewer number of children who will have to live without a mother. For less than \$20, a family’s life can change forever. Thank you to the Patcha Foundation.