Sharing skills and experience to improve global health

30 July 2012

The Addenbrooke’s Abroad team works to support CUH staff and students to play their part in improving global health by volunteering. Our hospitals are among the few hospitals in UK to support world health and have a dedicated team working on that.

Addenbrooke’s Abroad was established in 2006 and at no cost to the NHS has since then supported in excess of 150 volunteers to give over 1,000 hours in 25 countries including El Salvador, Botswana, Romania, India, Uganda, Nepal, Kenya and Sierra Leone.

Léonie Wykes, Addenbrooke’s Abroad fundraising manager, said: ‘Addenbrooke’s Abroad transforms and saves lives, both around the world and here in the UK.

The lives of our volunteers are touched forever as they never forget their placements and bring back with them experiences which lead to improvements within the NHS which ultimately benefit the patients we treat.’

Volunteers work together with the medical staff overseas to improve treatments, patient outcomes and save lives. Léonie continued: ‘Our emphasis on sharing skills means that change is sustainable so that professional development and improvements to patient care
continue even after the placement has ended.'

Addenbrooke's Abroad currently has two formalised Health Partnerships - one with Botswana and the other with El Salvador.

In 2007 in Botswana a multidisciplinary health partnership was established between CUH, Addenbrooke's Abroad, Princess Marina Hospital and the Botswana Ministry of Health in 2007. The Addenbrooke's Abroad programme director Evelyn Brealey is currently seconded to Botswana to lead a healthcare leadership training programme.

Also in 2007 with the support of the El Salvador Ministry of Health, Addenbrooke's Abroad established a Link with the National Maternity Hospital. The focus of the partnership is to reduce maternal, female and neonatal mortality.

Among the Addenbrooke's Abroad volunteers is Dr Caroline Sprinz, paediatric trainee, who went to China for 2 months. Caroline was working in The Butterfly children hospice - the first palliative care organisation in the country.

She said: 'It was a great experience. I was the only medical person for 4 weeks there. During my placement I have learned about adverse medical conditions and how to cope with a large workload.'

Caroline explained that a lot of children are getting really sick because they are not receiving treatment at the right time. But the good thing is that about half of the babies are getting better when they are diagnosed correctly.

It is almost impossible to quantify the number of patients treated abroad. One example however is a screening programme for diabetic eye disease that Addenbrooke's Abroad has established with partners in Botswana. Over 1,500 patients have been screened and 26 patients identified as a result of the screening were provided with treatment to prevent blindness. All patients are now part of a regular screening programme. The Project is continuing to develop screening to will become a nationwide programme.
Addenbrooke’s Abroad is part of ACT. Registered Charity No. 1048868

This story first appeared as a feature in the Cambridge News