

Claire Bedford

Prayer Letter

April 2020

www.bmsworldmission.org/cbedford



Greetings to you all from Chad in fully-fledged hot season. I hope this finds you able to safely traverse this current unprecedented world health situation we find ourselves in. I have been keeping up to date with how it's affecting countries outside of Chad. At the time of writing (early April) Chad has only a handful of confirmed cases. I sincerely hope it stays that way, but we have to be realistic and plan for an eventual rise in the number and severity of cases here.

Unsurprisingly, the focus of a lot of our work in the past month or so has been on getting prepared for coronavirus to hit Chad full-on. At the time of writing, we're unsure as to the role of Guinebor Hospital (classed as a private hospital) in any ensuing mass illness of the population. The government hospitals are likely to be the first responders and indeed, it's a government hospital that has been assigned as the treatment centre for the cases already confirmed. The government has been working hard to be prepared and I've been impressed with the speed and efficiency that they put preventative measure in place to minimise the potential spread of the virus. The airport has been shut to passenger flights since mid-March. All shops selling non-essential items are shut, as are all churches, mosques, restaurants and bars. Handwashing stations have popped up all over the town. Communal transport of more than 4 people per vehicle has been banned. The President did a national radio and television address two weeks ago encouraging hand washing and social distancing.

At Guinebor Hospital we've installed handwashing stations at both entrances, we have a member of staff screening the temperatures of everyone coming in the door (and have already needed to replace the infra-red scanning thermometer once because the first one died with the heat) and we have a new area for assessing patients with suspected covid-19 erected outside the front patient entrance, to avoid those people entering the hospital. We've been able to supply all staff (we have 90 members of Chadian staff and 10 members of international staff) with face masks. The disposable ones

were becoming scarce, so we've had a local tailor make cloth ones. We are also prepared with extra latex gloves. This is what we're able to do to try and prevent the entrance and spread of the virus within the hospital. A lot of this stuff has been purchased thanks to some emergency funds sent by BMS from their Coronavirus Appeal, for which we are extremely grateful. How we were going to afford these unexpected 'extras' was becoming a big burden.

Patient numbers are gradually reducing at the hospital, probably due to a mixture of reasons: people are naturally staying at home (although there's no enforced lockdown as yet), people are scared of getting the virus, people can't physically get here because of the lack of transport options now that minibus taxis are banned. This could have devastating effects on the general health of the population because the other illnesses we see year-round are still there. However, we've not ground to an absolute halt and are continuing life as usual, caring for many surgical and medical patients who seek care at the hospital.

I have to again mention my joy at the x-ray department being up and running after many months of hard work and prayers 😊 The photo shows the technician getting a patient, who's had a broken bone fixed by our nurse-surgeon Kalbassou, ready for an x-ray to check on the bone's healing. Thank you all so much for your prayers regarding this department, they've certainly been answered!

My work in the last couple of months has also seen me slightly more in the pharmacy and slightly less in the admin room, subsequent to the arrival of my teammate Gareth. I've been able to work alongside him and hand over some work which has been a blessing. I am now able to gently start turning my attentions back to the world of pharmacy and how I can continue to improve the management and use of medications at the hospital. General hospital management won't leave my life forever though as I am still on the senior management team (SMT) of the hospital.



The closure of restaurants and my favourite café in the city has meant that the few outlets for recreation (and air conditioning!) I previously had are gone. I am grateful that as of right now, we're not on total lockdown and I can leave the hospital and visit friends. I'm also grateful that there are more people living at the hospital now in our bigger international team, as that creates opportunity for socialising (the photo shows us having a group picnic on a nearby farm, before the first case of coronavirus was confirmed in Chad). I am also grateful that I was able to have the week off (out of Chad) back in February, before the airport shut. It was a relaxing week spent with a good friend and I was able to recharge.



During the month of March, Audrey the Chadian head of pharmacy, was on annual leave. Usually when he's away, this means far more work for me in the pharmacy, ensuring that we have enough supplies and going to and from the wholesalers. However before he left for his holiday, Audrey was able to train up another member of experienced pharmacy staff to do the majority of the tasks he does. That was a real blessing to me because Cleopas was able to hold the fort and refer to me when needed. It's always great to see the Chadians stepping up and taking responsibility and Cleopas did just that.



Praise and prayer points

Praise points:

- A lovely week away in February
- The larger international team
- Dr Oubre's knee surgery was successful and he's recovering well in the US
- The emergency funding from BMS to help us prepare for coronavirus
- Cleopas being able to deputise for Audrey during Audrey's holiday

Prayer points:

- Endurance during hot season which is the hardest time of year to live in Chad (April to June). Please pray this for me and also the new mission worker families who are experiencing their first ever hot season. It's tough!
- That coronavirus will not run rampant in Chad
- Wisdom for the SMT as we make decisions that affect the running of the hospital, at a time when our income is likely to go down
- For the young guy from a family of the majority faith, who became a believer. He is still in prison. That he would feel to Holy Spirit's presence with him and that other believers who are supporting him would have wisdom as to the best way, culturally, to do this

Thank you so much for your support in prayer. It really is a sustenance to me here!

Many blessings on you as you yourselves live through an incredibly challenging, bewildering and unprecedented time.

Claire