One step forward two steps back.

Dear Friends,

We have now been back in Bardai for 4 weeks and it has been a busy time. Lots of different things have happened including a 5-day Ophthalmology Caravan (mobile team from Ndjamen sponsored by the President’s wife, Hinda Debi) performing cataract surgery. People came from all over the Tibesti making the hospital very busy as they rapidly screened 1100 people that signed up for a consultation and selected the 80 patients for operating. As people travelled other family members and neighbours came as well, so there were unprecedented numbers of dental patients and other outpatients at the same time. This first Caravan is encouraging as it shows that the hospital has made some progress and is now included in the program that has run over the past 8 years in other regions. A good thing as we also received a portable ultrasound machine and 3 solar panels which we can add in to our larger solar project.

It was really encouraging to perform our second caesarean section at Bardai, this time for a local Teda woman. A quick decision was needed to save the baby and the husband rapidly understood that he couldn’t drive to Libya in time. Next day it was the talk of the town, a matter of civic pride that the first caesarean has been performed at Bardai hospital (the first one last year presumably not counting as the women was not Teda). Then just as we think that we are making progress and that community attitudes and confidence in the hospital are changing something happens to bring us back to earth.

A couple of days later, just as Andrea was going home, a pick-up truck drove quickly up to the maternity dept. The driver, an excited local chief shouted for her ‘come quickly and open the delivery room its urgent’ she rushed to open the door got a wheel chair and went to bring the lady from the car to the delivery room. She opened the car door and found a lady half lying in the back and a screaming baby, Helen, our Swiss midwife arrived at the same time ready to tie and cut the cord but that had been done ( with what?) by another lady sat in the back. The cord tie was a palm leaf! Andrea reached in to take the baby, but before she could the driver seeing the baby was now delivered, jumped back in the car turned round to the three women and said ‘Ok can we go’ and drove off. Apparently our care was no longer needed.

Most deliveries are still not taking place at the hospital and we pray for wisdom as to how to encourage the Teda women to use the care we can offer for safe deliveries.
A major challenge since we have worked here has been the lack of medical and nursing staff, so it was really good news when Dr Sidi the Regional Health Director arrived with eight new Ministry of Health doctors. Half are newly graduated Chadians directly from medical school in Cuba others are relatively new doctors from Ndjamena Medical School who have been working on temporary contracts in the South of Chad. It is good to have doctors at the hospital and although at first it was rather a large number of us in the morning meetings, each trying to make a good verbal impression, now they have been moved to their official posts around the region and we have 3 remaining at the hospital. It will be good to leave doctors at the hospital when we go to a near by village for the dental team the first week in November. We pray that we can develop good relationships with them and it will help the hospital provide better care and organisation.

So now we have lots of doctors but now we have virtually no nurses, and the 4 nurses that are here are only temporary hospital employees. Also our midwife left to help the new doctors set up the maternity in the nearest town, before leaving permanently for Ndjamena. It has been suggested by the Regional Health Director, who decided just before leaving, that the doctors can be both nurses and doctors but in reality this will mean poor care and no progress. Accordingly the two nurses that are leaving in November are not to be replaced so that will leave only 2 nurses. We will then have a strange hospital with more doctors than nurses.

Give thanks for:

The successful Caesarean
The new doctors
The patients able to see again

Please pray for:

That everyone can see what is best for the hospital and we can employ some more nurses rapidly.

The organisation of the hospital.

The dental team visit.

We thank you for being with us on this back and forth journey of trying to bring good health care to the Tibesti we see many people being healed despite all the difficulties and we know that your prayers make all the difference.

With many blessings
Andrea and Mark

PS Andrea has just been invited to help prepare food early tomorrow morning at the naming ceremony for the baby from the back of the car.
If you would like to support Andrea and Mark Hotchkin by prayer and committed regular giving, visit bmsworldmission.org/partners or call 01235 517617 for a 247 Partners leaflet.

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