

Medical Students' Aid Project

Annual Report

Issue 1 – 2001

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What is the MSAP?

The MSAP is an initiative of medical students at UNSW, which aims to raise funds and source specialist medical equipment to fill specific needs in hospitals in developing nations across the world. Many of these hospitals do not even have the most basic of equipment and medications. Thirty UNSW medical students who have worked in these areas while studying for their degrees, have chosen to work to 'give back' by aiming to fulfil the life-saving needs and requirements of these hospitals. From November 2001 to February 2002, students from UNSW will visit six hospitals throughout the developing world. Each hospital has requested specific items of equipment, which we will raise in Australia and send across with the students. In future years, this will provide the basis for an ongoing partnership between UNSW students and hospitals throughout the developing world.

MSAP wins a national award!

Congratulations to the students of the MSAP, for winning a national AMSA award for 'Best New Medical Society Initiative, 2001'. The Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) is the peak national student representative body for medical students. It makes this award each for new initiatives among the eleven medical schools throughout Australia. The award was announced at the Grand Ball of the AMSA Convention, which was held in Melbourne during the first week of July. The award not only involves recognition of this initiative, but also a \$200 prize which will be used to further the objectives of the project.

Contact us

If you wish to continue receiving MSAP Updates, or would like to find out more, contact Anna Fairbairn at <mailto:msap@medmail.com>. Donations can be made through the UNSW Foundation. Call Jenny Marchionni on 9385 2203 for further information.

The MSAP is a venture of the UNSW Medical Students' Society supported by the Faculty of Medicine at the University of New South Wales.

MSAP Student Profile

Adrian Fung Year 5 Medicine, UNSW

Partner Hospital: Lady Willingdon Hospital, Manali, India

What are your plans for your elective in 2001?

In January 2002 I'll be visiting Lady Willingdon Hospital (LWH) in Manali, India. Located above 6500 feet in the beautiful Indian Himalaya, LWH is a small but busy rural hospital with 45 in-patient beds servicing a population of around 25 000. There is no central heating or hot water, electricity is erratic (with blackouts frequent), patients have to pay for all medical equipment used on them (including syringes, cannulas etc.), and many walk days to reach the hospital in the hope (rather than expectation) of a cure. Despite limited supplies the five doctors make the most of what they have to provide the highest level of medical and surgical care possible.

What types of services does Lady Willingdon Hospital provide?

LWH caters for the full spectrum of medical care. Common conditions in the area include: tuberculosis, pneumonia, hepatitis, typhoid, trauma and peri-natal medicine. As well as caring for inpatients, the hospital is responsible for preventative outreach trips within the Kullu district (for such things as immunizations). Just 2800 rupees (about A\$120) is enough for a full course of anti-tuberculosis drugs in a child.

What responsibilities will you have in Manali?

Visiting medical students are given ample responsibility under supervision, with such tasks including spinal blocks, deliveries, suturing, catheterization and being 'on-call' every second night.

What equipment has the hospital requested of the MSAP?

The hospital is in short supply of many basic medical equipment. Staff in Manali have particularly asked for a range of items including gloves, glucometers, nebulisers and a steriliser for surgical equipment. All of this equipment is readily available in our own Australian hospitals, and can make a huge difference to the standard of medical care.

So, why did you decide to conduct your elective in a developing country?

I decided to visit LWH as a professional and personal challenge. I don't envisage it to be easy or comfortable, but I do believe it provides me an opportunity to give back something that I have learnt in my five years of medical school to those in need. That's what the MSAP is all about- making a small effort in our world to make a big difference in theirs.

Adrian will be visiting Lady Willingdon Hospital, Manali, India in January 2002.

A profile of Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, a partner of the MSAP

Greg Fox is a sixth year medical student who spent two months at 'Queens' over 2000-1...

My most haunting memory of Queens was watching a funeral procession accompany an enshrouded body through the hospital - bathing the long winding corridors in the harmony of beautiful African traditional song. The daily bustle of the hospital stopped for just a moment, as the procession passed. Then everyone continued walking along as if nothing had happened.

I think that image typifies my elective Queens - health care in the setting of a very rich and beautiful culture, yet underpinned by constant reminders of deprivation and suffering. Spending two months in the Children's ward, I was privileged to learn about a spectrum of diseases which you seldom experience in Australia. Malaria, severe malnutrition, meningitis, pneumonia and HIV/AIDS were among the most common conditions I encountered. Although there were only two blood tests available (not even a full blood count!), the doctors were remarkably astute - relying mainly upon their own clinical skills of observation. Queens Hospital constantly overflows with an insatiable demand, arising from the 5 million-odd population which it supplies. Each day, over 100 children are present for medical treatment - swelling to 250 or more during the annual malaria epidemics. Due to the long distances, and relatively sparse medical services, children often present extremely late to the hospital - and therefore many have a relatively poor prognosis.

The value of a project such as the MSAP becomes very clear when you consider the lack of resources at the hospital. The children's ward operates with a bare minimum of equipment. Routinely, two or three children will be seen in one corner of a crowded room, sharing oxygen from a concentrator designed for one. Often doctors have to search for simple cannulas to inject basic antibiotics. Very little goes to waste.

So, my elective at Queens was immensely rewarding. I gained a great deal of perspective about the privilege we enjoy, in a well-equipped health care system. As future Australian doctors, we could choose to ignore this great inequality and continue to look forward to the next generation of MRIs, or new designer drug. However, I think we have a responsibility to share what we have with those who do not. This is where I see the importance of the MSAP. I hope that you will join us in our mission: to make a real and ongoing difference in hospitals throughout the developing world.

Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital is a Partner Hospital of the MSAP. Fifth year student Rebecca Blake and Toby Winton-Brown will be continuing the relationship with UNSW in 2001-2.

Our Partner Hospitals' wish lists...

Students who will visit Partner hospitals in 2001-2 have contacted these hospitals to find out what these hospitals need. We have an extensive 'wish list' of requests from these hospitals, including...

Cannulas, urinalysis dipsticks, gauze, gloves, glucometers, pregnancy tests, needles, surgical masks, suture sets, ophthalmoscopes, stethoscopes, weighing scales, centrifuges, oxygen concentrators, portable X-ray machines, sterilisers, asthma medication, basic antibiotics, otoscopes, syringes, handwash solution, high kilojoule powder, thermometers, heart monitoring devices, dressing trolleys and emergency equipment. If you are able to help provide any of these items, please let us know.

Partner hospitals for 2001

The MSAP is based upon ongoing partnerships between hospitals in developing countries, and medical students at the University of NSW. In 2001, the following students will represent the MSAP in developing nations:

- **Cath Tacon** will conduct her elective in Tupua Tamasese Meade Hospital in Apia, **Samoa**.
- **Rebecca Blake and Toby Winton-Brown** will conduct their electives in Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Blantyre, **Malawi**.
- **Adrian Fung** will conduct his elective in Lady Willington Hospital, Manali, **India**.
- **Sarah Woodgate** will conduct her elective in Vaiola Hospital, Nuku 'alofa, **Tonga**
- **Asif Saber** will conduct his elective in Dhaka Children's Hospital, **Bangladesh**

Five of these six hospitals have been visited by UNSW students in the past two years, ensuring that the equipment we provide is appropriate to its destination.

Acknowledgements

The MSAP in 2001 is kindly supported by the generosity of:

- UNSW Faculty of Medicine
- United Medical Protection
- Westpac Bank
- Johnson & Johnson
- The Australian Medical Association
- South Eastern Area Health Service
- Northern Area Health Service
- Ansell Australia
- Clementine Flowers
- Bar Coluzzi

Medical Students' Aid Project

Annual Report

Issue 2 – 2001 “Updates”

What is the MSAP?

The MSAP is an initiative of medical students at UNSW, which aims to raise funds and source specialist medical equipment to fill specific needs in hospitals in developing nations across the world. Many of these hospitals do not even have the most basic of equipment and medications. Thirty UNSW medical students who have worked in these areas while studying for their degrees, have chosen to fulfil some of the life-saving needs and requirements of these hospitals. This summer medical students from UNSW are spending up to two months working in these hospitals. Over the past six months MSAP students have worked to obtain requested medical equipment and medications to send overseas. Two shipments have already arrived, and more are on their way!

The MSAP in 2001

The *Medical Students' Aid Project* has had marvellous success in its inaugural year, thanks to the generous support from individual and corporate donors. Over \$25,000 in cash and \$20,000 in equipment and medicines has been raised to send to five countries in the developing world. This edition of *Updates* reflects upon the progress made this year to send basic medical supplies to some of the poorest countries in the world. We also look at the ongoing links with hospitals in developing nations and review plans to continue to build MSAP in 2002. Thank you for your generous support of this exciting project. As you will see from this edition of *Updates*, your contributions help to make a difference in people's lives around the world.

Greg Fox

MSAP Executive

MSAP success: how we have raised equipment for our partner hospitals.

MSAP has been successful at tracking down equipment from the 'wish lists' of our Partner Hospitals. The estimated value of basic medical equipment and medications which has been accrued totals at least \$20,000!! A significant amount of equipment requested in 'wish lists' from each partner hospital has been located.

What has been sent?

- Over 10 cubic metres (four pallets) of equipment have been sent to Samoa and Tonga. This arrived in November met by UNSW students.
- A fifth pallet of equipment will shortly leave Australia for Malawi.

Partner hospitals for 2001

The following students are currently representing the MSAP in developing nations:

- Cath Tacon is representing MSAP at Tupua Tamasese Meade Hospital in Apia, Samoa.
- Rebecca Blake and Toby Winton-Brown are working in Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Blantyre, Malawi.
- Sarah Woodgate is representing MSAP at Vaiola Hospital, Nuku 'alofa, Tonga
- Asif Saber is representing MSAP at Dhaka Children's Hospital, Bangladesh
- In addition, MSAP is supporting Lady Willingdon Hospital, Manali, India.

Four of these five hospitals have been visited by UNSW students in the past two years, ensuring that the equipment we provide is known to be appropriate to its destination.

Forming local partnerships: MSAP and Global Medical Support

The Medical Students' Aid Project has formed a formal partnership with Global Medical Support (GMS). GMS is based in Sydney and Melbourne and has been sending equipment to developing nations for over ten years. We are indebted to this organisation for their advice, and for use a warehouse space at Waverley Council Depot. A strong relationship will continue with GMS over the coming year.

- Over \$3000 of in-date medications have been sent to Samoa, Tonga and Malawi.
- A new pulse oximeter and glucometer, meeting local requirements, have been purchased in India for Lady Willingdon Hospital, Manali.
- Our partner hospital in Bangladesh has been sent several sterilisers. Other medical equipment will be sent to Dhaka Children's Hospital in the new year.
- Plans to send additional shipments to Tonga and Samoa are well underway, scheduled for the first half of 2002.

How has MSAP obtained this basic medical equipment?

Large donations of basic medical equipment were made by Sydney's Area Health Services. We have received equipment from various hospitals, including syringes, sutures, a defibrillator, nasogastric tubes, stethoscopes, ophthalmoscopes and other basic items.

Links have also been built with manufacturing and distribution companies. Thanks to generous donations by private companies, we have obtained thermometers, otoscopes, sutures, defibrillator pads, gloves and many other items.

How do we store and sort our equipment?

Due to the volume of equipment it became obvious that the MSAP could not continue to prevail on the generosity of the MSAP members sorted and catalogued donated goods before loading them onto pallet for shipment. In accordance with the strict World Health Organisation standards for donating medications, MSAP has purchased in-date medications to send overseas. We have worked closely with OPAL, an Australian aid organisation that obtains below-cost medications. By tapping into its experience at supplying and transporting basic medications, we have now sent in excess of \$3,000 worth of basic medicines to Samoa, Tonga and Malawi. These range from basic antibiotics to pain relief tablets.

MSAP Student Profile

I will be spending a month in the Paediatrics Department at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Malawi as part of my elective for 2001. I chose to go to Malawi to really challenge myself, in both a medical and personal sense. This elective will provide a fantastic opportunity to step outside of my normal 'comfort zones'. I hope to learn about how medicine is practiced in a resource-poor area and also to experience the rich culture of an African nation first-hand. When most students start medicine they have an ideal to provide health care to those in need, and I think this may serve to refresh the ideal while gaining an unbelievable opportunity to learn.

Malawi is a tiny narrow land-locked country located in south-east Africa, bordering on Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It is around half size of Victoria. Malawi is the sixth poorest country in the world which is not at war. In most parts of the country over 90% of the population do not have paid work. My role in the MSAP has largely been as part of the fundraising team. We have contacted individual donors and sought corporate sponsorship. I have been excited by the positive response - so many people have been very generous and very supportive of the initiative.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital is in need of many of the most basic pieces of medical equipment. Students from past years have helped us to put together a list which targets the items which are needed most. These include cannulae, syringes, simple antibiotics, urine dipsticks and nasogastric tubes. I will also be compiling a new 'wish list' to help us identify equipment which students can take to Malawi at the end of 2002.

What has MSAP set out to achieve?

The MSAP was built on the belief that every contribution made to partner hospitals is of value and that an understanding of issues underlying health care in developing nations is a fundamental starting point for any long-term solutions.

The key objectives of the MSAP are to:

1. Support hospitals in developing nations by providing targeted medical aid.
2. Establish an ongoing partnership between UNSW medical students and nominated 'Partner Hospitals' in developing nations.
3. Improve awareness of issues in providing health care to developing nations, in the medical and wider community.

4. Maintain medical student autonomy in the vision and administration of the project within the guidelines and protocols of UNSW Medicine.

How are our donations used?

Funds donated to MSAP are used directly to purchase and transport basic medical equipment and medications organisations, MSAP has almost no administrative To date, over \$25,000 has been raised. The majority has been used for transportation, with some held in reserve to enable us to fund additional requirements early in 2002. We are committed to ensuring that donations to the MSAP are distributed to our partner hospitals in an efficient and accountable manner.

Further donations would be greatly appreciated so as even more equipment may be sent to our partner hospitals.

Rebecca Blake Year 6 Medicine, UNSW

Partner Hospital: Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Malawi, Central Africa

Acknowledgements

The MSAP in 2001 is kindly supported by the generosity of:

- Ansell Australia
- The Australian Medical Association
- Global Medical Support
- Illawarra Area Health Service
- Johnson & Johnson
- Mallesons Stephens Jacques Lawyers
- The National Australia Bank
- Northern Sydney Area Health Service
- South Eastern Sydney Area Health Service
- South Western Sydney Area Health Service
- United Medical Protection
- UNSW Faculty of Medicine

And the many individuals who have made personal and financial contributions to the establishment of the Medical Students' Aid Project.

Thank you!!

Contact us

If you would like to find out more about MSAP, please contact Cath Tacon, a member of the 2002 MSAP Executive at msap@med.unsw.edu.au

Donations (by cash, cheque or credit card) can be made through the UNSW Foundation. Call Jennifer Marchionni on (02) 9385 2203 for further information.

Directions for MSAP in 2002 and beyond: a sustainable organisation

Students who will visit Partner Hospitals in 2001-2 have contacted these hospitals to find out what their requirements are. An extensive 'wish list' of requests from these hospitals, include...

Cannulas, urinalysis dipsticks, gauze, gloves, glucometers, pregnancy tests, needles, surgical masks, suture sets, ophthalmoscopes, stethoscopes, weighing scales, centri-fuges, oxygen concentrators, portable X-ray machines, sterilisers, asthma medication, basic antibiotics, otoscopes, syringes, handwash solution, high kilojoule powder, thermometers, heart monitoring devices, dressing trolleys and emergency equipment.

If you are able to help provide any of these items, please let us know (msap@med.unsw.edu.au)

Become a regular supporter of the MSAP

To help us maintain strong support for our Partner Hospitals in 2002 and beyond, please consider making a donation to the MSAP. A donation card is enclosed. We greatly appreciate your support.