

Returning to Ethiopia – A Model For The Future

BY EVAN KEIL, CSI ETHIOPIA 2017 TEAM MEMBER

“A new opportunity.”

That is what Dr. Woubeshet Ayenew, an esteemed cardiologist and CSI volunteer, called our recent trip to Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. Dr. Ayenew grew up in Ethiopia, immigrating to the United States to further his medical education and begin his career as a cardiologist in Minnesota. He is a cardiologist at Hennepin County Medical Center and Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Minnesota.

Historically, Children's Surgery International has entered new countries to perform ENT and urology surgeries – caring for children, performing life-changing surgeries and providing education. When we met Dr. Ayenew, a new era and opportunity in the area of cardiology presented itself.

Two canceled trips due to civil unrest in Ethiopia forced CSI to wait; this year's trip proved to be reinvigorated as a result. In addition to performing ENT surgeries and providing education, we embarked on an exciting new chapter of cardiac disease prevention.

The team worked with our Bahir Dar partners to perform life-changing surgeries and conduct hands-on training and education to help build the skills of our colleagues at Felege Hiwot Hospital. We also began work on the ambitious task of helping them create a robust rheumatic heart disease screening and prevention program.

Rheumatic heart disease (RHD) is tearing through Africa. While the continent is home to 10 percent of the world's population, as many as 50 percent of children affected by RHD live there. RHD can be reversed, but only after a complex, expensive surgical procedure. RHD can also be prevented.

Dr. Ayenew has the talent, perspective and motivation to make a real difference. Rather than reversing the course of this disease for a dozen individuals on any given trip, he believes we should focus on primary prevention. If we do, perhaps in “5 to 10 years we will start to see an improvement.”

By working closely with Ethiopian government officials, the president of the local university and the dean of the medical school, CSI initiatives such as the RHD prevention program can be successful. *(continued on page 2)*



9-year-old Asnake at screening



9-year-old Asnake after surgery



Families travel long distances to receive treatments.

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CALENDAR

Harbel, Liberia
January 11-20, 2018

Bahir Dar, Ethiopia
April 25 - May 5, 2018

Hermosillo, Mexico
October 2018

Keep up with us when we're abroad!
Follow the CSI blog on our website:

www.childrenssurgeryintl.com



SAVE THE DATE!

NEW NAME - NEW VENUE

BEYOND SMILES BASH

Saturday, April 14, 2018

Minneapolis Event Center
at Historic St. Anthony Main



(Ethiopia, continued from page 1)



Dr. Ayenew (right) training a group of Ethiopian medical professionals.

robust screening and prevention process to combat RHD; to support initiatives that support Ethiopian medical professionals to work in their home country; to perform surgeries; and, ultimately, to impact lives for the greater good of those we serve.

Around the world, CSI continues to be committed to improving long-term outcomes by developing sustainable partnerships and thus supporting local physicians to remain in their home countries and provide critical services. Dr. Ayenew says that Africa is losing many of its brightest physicians to Europe and America because the challenges of providing care in resource-poor regions sometimes seems insurmountable.

CSI has the opportunity to provide a model for future African medical leadership. Dr. Ayenew described it best,

“The brain drain may look like a large river. Thankfully, however, CSI is a small stream going in the opposite direction to counter this large flood.”

This is why we must continue to go to Ethiopia: To provide surgery as well as hands-on training; to begin building a

Hope for a Better Future – CSI Mexico, 2017

BY ZINDA SCHAEFER, CSI MEDICAL RECORDS VOLUNTEER

I recently returned home from my first surgical mission trip to Hermosillo, Mexico, with Children's Surgery International. The CSI team comprises dedicated, compassionate, loving medical professionals who are really good at what they do. I knew this trip would be emotional, but I had no idea how it would change my life forever.

We arrived at the hospital early on the first morning to see parents already waiting for the CSI team. This was a critical day for these families. Their precious children would be evaluated to determine their surgical needs and to ensure they were healthy enough for surgery. Here comes my first wave of tears!

One of my roles was to create a medical chart for each child. The CSI surgeons, along with pediatrician Dr. Paul Melchert, evaluated 128 children throughout the day, determining that 58 were candidates for 62 procedures. The schedule was created, and the parents were notified of which day their little ones would be in the operating room. It was a very busy, hectic and emotional day. I had a box of Kleenex close by!

The first surgical day was exciting. The smiles on the faces of the parents is something I will never forget. They now had hope for a better future for their child. They waited patiently, never complaining. As the first babies came out of surgery and I saw their new smiles, it wasn't just tears, but sobs, of joy. These amazing surgeons had performed their magic.

The nurses and Dr. Melchert now cared for the children like they were their own, ensuring they were comfortable and safe as they awakened from anesthesia. I waited as the parents were brought back to see their little one for the first time following surgery. At this point the tears weren't just mine – everyone was crying!

Nothing will ever be as magical for me, or should I say “priceless,” as this moment.



CSI Team with young patient after surgery.

(Mexico, continued from page 2)

Could it get any better? Yes – I had the opportunity to actually witness the magic! The surgical team allowed me to observe in the operating room. They were so gracious in explaining the entire surgical process. The surgeons are artists, transforming the children's precious faces. I also learned what a complex, critical part the anesthesiology team plays in a successful surgical outcome. By the end of the day I was exhausted – after all, I had been in surgery all day!

Without willing and skilled surgeons, doctors and nurses to provide this complex care, these children would continue to be shunned and bullied. They are sometimes prevented from attending school, or even worse, are "discarded" by their parents.

The CIMA Hospital volunteers are generous and caring, always looking out for the needs of the CSI team. Ask and they will make it happen! The St. Andrews staff helped to make everything run smoothly, working long hours alongside the CSI group.

Financial supporters are critical to allowing CSI volunteers to give children their lives back. 85% of dollars donated to CSI goes directly to support their surgical and teaching focus.

Please join me in generously donating to this impressive organization.



Zinda Schaefer (left) and Linda Specht (right).

Make a Lasting Impact – Change a Child's Life

Each fall, Children's Surgery International launches our year-end giving campaign. This annual campaign, called the Fall Fund Drive, is a critical component of our fundraising goals that support our surgical missions.

In 2018, CSI has trips planned to Ethiopia, Liberia and Mexico. We are exploring other sites in Africa and Asia as well! Our dedicated volunteers donate their time and their talents to perform the critical surgical care and teaching that occur on each trip, but as you can imagine these surgical trips require considerable funds. Your generous support is the foundation our volunteers need to do their work.

During this Fall Fund Drive, there are many opportunities to celebrate and support our work:

- Join us at our **Fall Event** – Tuesday, November 14, 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Able Seedhouse + Brewery
- Plan a gift to CSI on **Give to the Max Day** – Thursday, November 16
- Watch for our **Annual Appeal Letter** and send your donation in the enclosed envelope
- Join us for **A Style Social** to benefit CSI – Thursday, December 6, 6-9 p.m. Evereve, St. Louis Park
- **Donate** online at childrensurgeryintl.org

There are many ways to give and many ways to make a lasting impact in the world.

Together, we can change lives, one child at a time!



Children's Surgery International
825 Nicollet Mall Suite 706
Minneapolis, MN 55402
www.childrenssurgeryintl.org

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We work to make a lasting impact...



...one child at a time.

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*Join CSI in changing a child's life
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825 Nicollet Mall, Suite 706

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