

Funding reconstructive surgery, anesthesia, physical therapy and nursing education in Sierra Leone

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TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Establishing Surgical Services in Sub-Saharan Africa

ABSTRACT: Although very rich in mineral resources, over the last 3 decades Sierra Leone has consistently ranked among the five poorest countries in the world. Less than 15 surgeons serve a population of nearly seven million citizens. No surgical specialties exist in the country. Portland, Oregon based charity Surg+Restore (501c3) has partnered with a United Kingdom based charity Resurge/Africa to fund the training and education of physicians and ancillary medical personnel in establishing Sierra Leone's first and only plastic and reconstruction surgery department.

Methods: Since 2009, the two charities have funded international plastic surgical teams to provide surgical services at the Holy Spirit Hospital in Sierra Leone, while training hospital staff in perioperative surgical care and working alongside local physicians. As a result, three Sierra Leone physicians have been chosen as recipients of fully funded scholarships and are currently enrolled in plastic surgery and anesthesia training programs in Accra, Ghana.

Results: Five registered nurses will be fully trained in less than one year and have committed to return to the Holy Spirit Hospital. Sierra Leone's first plastic surgeon will finish his specialty training in less than 18 months. In addition, the country's first anesthesiologist will complete his training in less than three years. Both physicians will be board eligible upon completing their residencies.

Conclusion: Sierra Leone will have a self-sufficient reconstructive surgery department in less than ten years.

OBJECTIVE(S): It is estimated that 5% of a population will need surgical services in any given year. The prevalence of surgical needs in Sierra Leone is much higher. Sierra Leone will have a reconstructive plastic surgery department reducing morbidity and mortality.

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