

## **Cameroon 1999 to present**

### **Honorary Country Directors Dr Peter McCormick and Dr Alison Earley**

MCAI has been involved in paediatric work at the Regional Hospital Bamenda , North West region of Cameroon since 1999.

From 1999 to 2004, Dr Peter McCormick, a General Practitioner from Kettering UK, spent up to 3 months/year in the hospital, working on the neonatal unit and children's ward, teaching staff and students, and establishing treatment guidelines. Books and equipment were provided, and ward refurbishment was done.

He set up a Breast Milk Bank, to feed preterm, sick or orphaned babies on the neonatal unit. Healthy mothers donate milk, which is screened for infection and then pasteurised and stored in a freezer. The milk bank is still operating successfully, and MCAI employs a nurse to supervise it.

#### *Equipment for Breast Milk Bank*



In 2003, children with the highly malignant cancer Burkitt lymphoma, began to be treated with chemotherapy at the hospital. Professor Hesselting from South Africa, was doing research trials to establish safe, affordable and effective treatment regimes for these children. Dr Peter McCormick worked with him, and many children have since been cured of this cancer, which is always fatal if not treated. MCAI employed nurses to look after the children and give the chemotherapy.



*MCAI nurse and child with Burkitt lymphoma*

In 2004 Dr Alison Earley a UK paediatrician, took over as MCAI's project lead for Cameroon. In the same year a Cameroonian consultant, Dr Frida Sunjoh, started work in the hospital, as the only specialist paediatrician in the North West Region. She immediately recognized the need to establish a Prevention of Mother To Child Transmission (PMTCT) programme for HIV positive mothers, and to improve care for HIV +ve babies and children. MCAI has been able to help with this, and since 2006, has been employing nurses to recruit HIV +ve mothers to the PMTCT programme and follow up their babies. In 2011, we extended this programme to Nkwen clinic, in a very poor area of Bamenda, where a similar programme is now running.



*PMTCT nurses at Nkwen, Bamenda*

In 2009, following fund raising from a dedicated well -wisher in UK, a much needed extension to the neonatal nursery was finished. This enlarged the rooms for sick babies, added a milk kitchen, nurses' office, and a room for the mothers of ill babies to sleep, so that they could stay with their babies and breast feed in comfort. Electricity and water supplies were improved. In 2011, with funding from the Soroptimist 'Loos for Lyn' appeal, a shower and toilet block for mothers was built at the back of the new nursery building.

*Mother's room in neonatal nursery*



MCAI has an ongoing collaborative relationship with the hospital in Bamenda, which has included provision of equipment, and training in neonatal resuscitation. The hospital has welcomed medical students, nurses and doctors from the UK for short visits, to their mutual benefit.



*Neonatal resuscitation training.*

*Alison Earley Sept 2013*

