

Report on deployment at St Francis Referral Hospital Ifakara Sept 2022

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After a long journey to our destination Ifakara, we entered the St. Francis Referral Hospital for the first time with great expectations. After getting to know each other, we were shown around the hospital grounds. We found a situation that we could not believe and classify at the beginning. For example, some of the patients lay on mattresses without a sheet and wore no clothes. The bandages were heavily soiled with blood and secretions.

The next day we went to the internal medicine department. At first we were received with scepticism. Communication was difficult. This improved rapidly during our stay. After approaching the existing structures, through observation and discussions with the nursing staff and doctors, we got a deeper understanding of what was happening. It was a matter of tackling and getting the best out of the mostly difficult situations with minimalistic resources.

Our areas of work were wide-ranging. The tasks on the wards of internal medicine for men and women and surgery for men and women quickly changed from pure explanation and demonstration to action. We started cleaning beds, bedside tables and floors, as well as medical equipment. Another task was the nursing care of the patients. We measured the vital signs in the morning in preparation for the doctor's rounds. The patients were provided with fresh linen, and the wounds were cleaned daily and fresh bandages were applied. It was not always easy to ensure that the necessary supplies of bandages were replenished. The defective consumer goods, such as patient beds, were brought in for repair. Large repairs, such as a washing machine or the X-ray machine, were actively organized by Christine.

It was important for us to provide practical instruction for the nursing staff on site, as well as training in certain nursing activities. The days were filled with joy, contentment, success, failure, sadness and despair. Despite scarce resources, we tried to find ways to make difficult or seemingly hopeless situations a little easier and more bearable. It is very challenging to transfer European knowledge and knowhow, which seems right and we take for granted, to local conditions. The background and the resulting actions of the people in the hospital must first be questioned and understood in order to achieve lasting awareness in small steps.

We were always treated kindly and with respect, received a lot of trust from the patients, the relatives, the doctors and the nursing staff and carried out our work at the St. Francis Referral Hospital with great joy and commitment.

We would especially like to thank Christine for her tireless efforts. She enabled us to have this experience by accompanying her on her mission.

Two cultures meet and try to get closer. The initial shock and amazement turned into reality. Fear became trust. Desperation turned to frugality. Scepticism turned into friendship. Uncertainty turned into respectful togetherness. And out of nowhere came happiness. To describe the commitment in words would fill a book with a lot of emotion, impressions and experiences.

Thanks.