

## ORTHOPAEDIC CAMPS –‘WHAT’S THE BIG FUSS’?

Medical and surgical camps have been conducted for many years and in different countries and locations. The question that begs is; are these just feel good events or do they add value to the populations, systems and /or profession?

While this editorial will focus on orthopaedic and trauma camps, the conclusions would be similar to all medical and surgical camps. It is clear that apart from the many other reasons for holding orthopaedic and trauma camps, doctors and professional associations have an obligation to treat patients regardless of their incomes, race or social status. Due to the low orthopaedic surgeons to population ratio, many deserving patients either cannot get orthopaedic consultations/surgeries or they have to wait for a very long time for this to happen.

The paper by Ankit *et al.* (1) emphasizes the need for well trained and experienced orthopaedic surgeons. Their paper shows that even with the latest in diagnostic equipment, the role of clinical acumen cannot be overemphasized. In some remote parts of Kenya, these services can only be delivered by the means of a medical camp.

Free orthopaedic camps may be performed for a variety of reasons. A key aim is to provide free and high quality services for poor populations. The paper by Oeba *et al.* (2) reaffirms that specialized care may be required by most trauma patients. If this expertise is unavailable or out of reach financially for the patient, surgical camps may help deliver this care. The camps also help to raise awareness amongst the population of the available orthopaedic services in the region/country. This will help stem the need for patients to travel long distances to seek services that are easily within their reach but they were previously unaware of.

Orthopaedic camps are also of value to the various healthcare workers involved. They get an opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other. As surgery is both a science and an art, the art can only be taught by practice. Orthopaedic camps provide an avenue where residents and junior surgeons get exposure to a wide variety of cases in the presence of more experienced colleagues

The host healthcare workers are usually overburdened by the rigors of never ending orthopaedic and trauma work. Orthopaedic and trauma cases constitute the bulk of cases in most of our public institutions (3). When an orthopaedic camp helps to clear the backlog of cases in an institution, it boosts the morale and motivates the local team. The camps also help to make positive engagements with hospital

administrators and politicians. These are key stake holders and the camps can form a lobbying opportunity for resources needed to support orthopaedic services.

For an orthopaedic camp to be successful a lot of players/collaborators need to be involved including; orthopaedic surgeons and the association, host institutions, hospital administrators, concerned hospital staff and departments, orthopaedic and pharmaceutical companies, local/national/international corporates.

In the last one year the Kenya orthopaedic association (KOA) has successfully organized 5 free orthopaedic camps. These were carried out in Kenyatta National Hospital, Nanyuki Level 5 Hospital (4), Mombasa Level 5 Hospital, Thika and Kiambu Level 5 Hospitals and Nyeri Level 5 Hospital. Over 250 patients were operated and many more got free consultations. More than 50 surgeons who are KOA members and many more associate members participated in these events.

KOA is committed to continue holding free orthopaedic camps since it believes that such camps are an integral part of its mandate. At KOA our endeavor is to hold the camps in every region of the republic and give back to society. We call upon all our members and associate members to participate in these very noble events and prove that orthopaedic camps are not a big fuss.

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