



Polio: A Debilitating Disease in Nigeria

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, remains (in 2005) one of the three main global poliovirus reservoirs, India and Pakistan being the other two. Poliomyelitis (polio) is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus. It invades the nervous system, and can cause total paralysis in a matter of hours. It can strike at any age, but affects mainly children under three (over 50% of all cases). The virus enters the body through the mouth and multiplies in the intestine. Initial symptoms are fever, fatigue, headache, vomiting, stiffness in the neck and pain in the limbs. One in 200 infections leads to irreversible paralysis (usually in the legs). Poliovirus can spread widely before cases of paralysis are seen. As most people infected with poliovirus have no signs of illness, they are never aware they have been infected. After initial infection with poliovirus, the virus is shed intermittently in feces (excrement) for several weeks. During that time, polio can spread rapidly through the community. In Nigeria, as you walk or drive down the streets it is a common sight to see people with deformed limbs crawling on the ground or pushing themselves on homemade skateboards. Many of them are victims of Polio. Many of them have succumbed to a life of begging with little hope of an education or a job.

A Different View of the World

I have been working with two boys both diagnosed with Polio. Abner is a 14 year-old boy who lives at the ECWA Missionary School, which is a school for the children of Nigerian missionaries. For the last seven years Abner has crawled on the ground to get from one place to another. When I visited Nigeria in 2002 I saw Abner at the school and being an Occupational Therapist I really wanted to help him. A team from the U.S. donated money for Abner to have



surgery to straighten his legs. In November 2005 he had the surgery in Kano and was in cast for six weeks. He returned back to the school in January with leg braces, crutches, and a big smile. The children were so happy to see him and amazed that he could stand and walk. Abner now has a different view of the world. By the blessing of God and the skillful hands of the surgeon, Abner now sees the world not from the ground, but from a standing position. It has taken some practice for him to learn to walk in the braces, but he continues to improve. Two months after the surgery Abner came to the hospital for therapy.



We discovered that he had developed some problems with his knees due to the fact that his legs were straight all the time in the braces. He did not take the braces off during the day to stretch his legs either. We began an exercise program for him to stretch his legs each day. I decided that it would be very beneficial for him if he had braces with a knee joint so when he sat down he could bend his legs and that would help to keep his knees stretched out. I carried him to a place to get him measured for braces with knee joints and they will be ready soon.

A missionary friend called one day ten-year-old son Paul was diagnosed with hours to come to the hospital here in Jos for there was little strength in his legs to move stand with support and had enough hip holding him up. He also had weakness in his his arm. I felt that Paul had enough strength crutches. I gave his father instructions on then I was able to take him to get measured exercises and the braces he will be able to



and asked if I could help a Nigerian family whose Polio six months ago. The family had traveled eight testing. Paul was walking normally before, but now them so he was crawling to get around. He could strength to walk for a short distance with someone right shoulder that effected his ability to fully raise in his legs to be able to walk with braces and strengthening exercises he should do twice a day and for braces and crutches. We pray that with the walk on his own again.

Today, Polio has been eliminated from most of the world, and only seven countries worldwide remain polio-endemic with 98% of all global cases being in India, Nigeria, and Pakistan. The World Health Organization underscores the importance of continued vigilance. 'Although Nigeria is making significant progress towards stopping poliovirus transmission and reaching more children during immunization campaigns, we are still missing children, said Dr. Mohammed Belhocine, WHO Country Representative. WHO reinforced the importance of further improving the quality of the immunization activities through improved implementation at the ward level. 'It is only through improved immunization planning at the settlement level, will we find and immunize every child.'

Growing in Christ



Aunty, are we learning a song today? Aunty, I know my memory verse? Those are the greetings I get many times as I arrive at Transition House on Thursday for discipleship class. I have thirteen boys in my class all around the ages of twelve to fourteen. The majority of them can read and write. Many of them do not have a Bible that has the Old Testament and the New Testament. Right now we are learning the books of the New Testament and then we will learn the books of the Old Testament. I told the boys when they had learned all the books of the Bible I would buy them a Bible. They were all excited!

We have been in great need for discipleship material for the two junior boys classes. I was very excited to learn there was a Child Evangelism Fellowship store here in Jos and I visited the store to look for material. I found several six week studies on characters in the Bible, lessons

about God and spiritual growth as well as some missionary stories. A team that was here from the U.S. also left us some good material with flannelgraph pictures. This was a great blessing.

Once a month I give a lesson about a missionary and the work they did in the county in which they served. I get out the map and show the children where the country is located that the missionary served in and I also show pictures of the people and scenery you would find in that country. The children really enjoy learning about other countries and hearing the stories about what the missionary experienced and accomplished there. It has been a joyful yet challenging experience to work with these boys. I have tried many different teaching methods to see what worked best for this group and I pray for wisdom to help these boys continue to grow in their faith and their relationship with God.

Praise

- With the help of my new Hausa helper and going to a Hausa speaking church, my Hausa continues to improve.
- The children are really enjoying the playroom and there is always children playing when I walk by.
- We have found many sponsors for the boys.

Prayer

- Pray for the Christians in Nigeria as they have experienced attacks from M extremists. There have been many churches burned and people killed. It appears to be calming down, but the effect of the damage is still there.
- Pray for Miriam (M friend) who had surgery this month on her fractured leg. We have built a good friendship and I continue to pray that her and her family will come to know Christ.
- Pray for my discipleship class at Transition House. Pray for the boys as they try to learn all the books of the Bible and that they will continue to grow in their faith.
- Pray that we will continue to find sponsors for all the boys in the ministry. If you would be interested in sponsoring a needy child for \$25 a month, contact me by e-mail or mail and I will give you the information you need.

Gay Lynn

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
II Corinthians 4:17-18

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