

Mercy Ships 2023



I have recently returned from three weeks working for Mercy Ships on their new ship - The Global Mercy in Senegal.

Mercy Ships is an International Christian Charity that aims to deliver free expert surgical healthcare in specific areas to the world's poorest people. The aim is to follow the 2000-year-old model of Jesus in bringing hope and healing to the world's forgotten poor. Mercy Ships uses hospital ships to transform individuals and serve nations one at a time. All staff follow the core values of loving Christ, serving others, being people of integrity and seeking excellence. All give their services and time freely.

The challenge is always adapting to work in teams made up of strangers from many different countries. This year I worked with people from USA, Canada, Australia, Sweden, Germany, Holland, Norway, UK, France, South Africa, India and Senegal. So you can imagine the importance of these core values and serving with grace.

The highlights for me in this trip included...

Experiencing the new Global Mercy. My service was during weeks 3-5 of the field service so everything was brand new!

Easter on the Ship was a special time. Holy Week supported by our own Garden of Gethsemane in the International Lounge. Greeting the Easter sunrise on the top deck as a community. Easter Sunday service within the community was followed by a fantastic Easter Feast prepared by the galley. Everyone applauded them as they walked around the dining hall in recognition of all their hard work.

My work as an anaesthetist was, as always, challenging and set amidst some 'heart-warming' stories.

My first week involved anaesthetising children tragically suffering from severe burn injuries. In low-and-middle income countries where cooking is done on open fires / stoves within a confined area children are tragically burnt either from knocking over pots (often toddlers) or from garments catching on fire (older children). Operations involved releasing contractures and restoring tissue bulk and function through the use of tissue flaps.

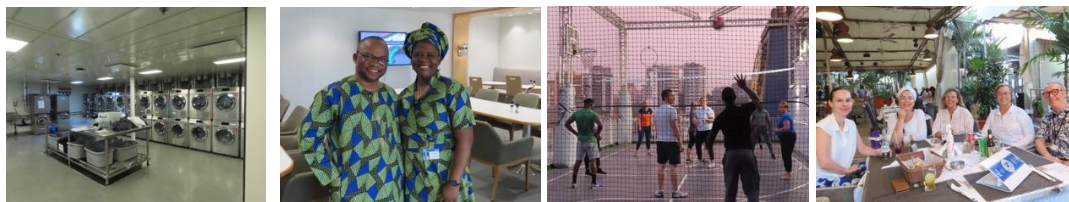
My second week involved general adult and paediatric surgery. One of our patients a little three year old came to the ship extremely ill suffering from an incarcerated hernia. Her father had had six children and sadly two had died. He thought his little girl was going to die.

Thankfully, all went well and the bowel was not compromised. She made a full dramatic recovery. Dad was very happy and she even smiled at me the next day!

During my final week I was involved in the maxillofacial theatre with patients suffering from huge facial tumours causing all sorts of airway issues for me. The surgeon, Gary Parker was, as always, calmness personified.

Living in a Christian community is a delight but it has to be worked at - after all we are all very different people. It is always great seeing old friends who one has worked with previously and built relationships with but there are also new people to meet and work with. This is where grace is so important. One has to live and work alongside people who are long-term resident on the ship and also local Senegalese day crew - providing new and interesting dynamics. Most of us join Mercy Ships because we want to give but as is so often the way one ends up receiving so much more than one gives.

Socially, I enjoyed meeting many new people - usually in the dining room, various global meetings, church services or even the launderette. Amidst the serious nature of the work - there were also wonderful funny moments. These help to build relationships but are perhaps better related in person - so feel free to ask me!



Finally, a little tip! - Do not go into the city on a Saturday before leaving for the airport. I got terribly lost in the busy market and nearly missed my transfer!

I hope to return to the Global Mercy in November when it will be visiting Sierra Leone. If you would like to know more then please contact me. Mercy Ships has some wonderful opportunities!

Chris