

PAACS: A Permanent and Sustainable Solution to the Critical Need for Surgical Care for Africa

PAN-AFRICAN ACADEMY OF CHRISTIAN SURGEONS (PAACS)



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93% of sub-Saharan Africa does not have access to safe, timely, and affordable surgical care



PAACS graduate, Dr. Moses Kasumba, Program Director at Malamulo Adventist Hospital, Malawi.



THE PAN-AFRICAN ACADEMY OF CHRISTIAN SURGEONS (PAACS) BEGAN AS A UNIQUE RESPONSE TO THE GREAT NEED FOR SURGICAL CARE IN AFRICA. According to the World Health

Organization, there should be one surgeon for a population of 20,000. Many places in Africa only have one surgeon for 250,000 people. In other places, it is worse — only one surgeon for 2.5 million people, resulting in needless death and permanent disability. Many Africans, especially in rural and under-resourced areas find themselves unable to find surgical care, or having to travel long distances, sometimes for days, to get the care they need. This can lead to the worsening of their medical condition, increasing the likelihood

of serious complications and potential death.

The Pan-African Academy of Christian Surgeons (PAACS) was created to serve these people. PAACS is an innovative five-year surgical residency that trains African physicians to become surgeons to care for Africa's sick and those without access to surgery. PAACS also disciplines these surgeons to provide spiritual hope to their patients in the name of Jesus Christ. At this time, PAACS is the only program in Africa that combines accredited surgical training with a spiritual curriculum. This model provides a permanent and sustainable solution to the critical surgical need rather than a temporary response.

PAACS began as the idea of long-term medical missionary, Dr. David C. Thompson, who recognized that he needed to pass on his knowledge and expertise to national physicians



PAACS residents in surgery at Malamulo Adventist Hospital



Current PAACS training sites (Egypt, Ethiopia, Niger, Kenya, Cameroon, Gabon, Malawi, and Tanzania)

so that medical care could continue to the people he was serving. In February 1996, Dr. Thompson and a group of like-minded general surgeons serving in Africa came together to form the Pan-African College of Christian Surgeons, whose name was later changed to Pan-African Academy of Christian Surgeons.

Working primarily with 10 mission hospitals in eight countries throughout Africa, PAACS trains African national physicians as surgeons. These men and women have been called to make a commitment to serve God and those in need in the underserved areas of Africa. Currently, PAACS is training 98 residents and fellows in 16 surgical training programs, which include



PAACS Graduates, John Kanyi, Valentine Mbithi, and Philip Blasto, the PAACS general surgery program AIC Litein Hospital, Kenya



Residents praying bedside at AIC Litein Hospital

10 General Surgery Programs, 3 Orthopaedic Surgery Programs, 1 Pediatric Surgery Program, 1 Cardiothoracic Surgery Fellowship, and 1 Head & Neck Surgery Fellowship.

PAACS has issued 102 Graduate Certificates with graduates serving in 21 countries throughout Africa. To date, 100% of these graduates have gone on to work in rural, or under-resourced areas of the continent, caring for the poor of all races and religions. Based on our 2020 Alumni survey, we estimate that one PAACS graduate will impact over 3,000 lives each year with surgeries and clinical interventions. In a 20-year career, that graduate will touch over 61,000 lives!

In 2020, with much excitement, PAACS opened its very first general surgery training program run completely by PAACS graduates at AIC Litein Hospital, Kenya. In total, 19 PAACS graduates serve as faculty within various programs and are training the next generation of surgeons for Africa. Our graduates also serve in leadership positions in their community. All are part of a permanent and sustainable solution to the critical need for surgical care for Africa.

From Canada to Egypt to Serve God

Dr. Sherif Hanna is a surgical oncologist with



Dr. Sherif and Mary-Lou Hanna



Harpur Memorial Hospital, Egypt



Dr. Sherif Hanna with PAACS residents at Harpur Memorial Hospital

a special interest in hepatic, pancreatic, and biliary oncology from Toronto, Canada. Over the course of his surgical career, Dr. Hanna became involved with the international work of the Pan-African Academy of Christian Surgeons (PAACS). In 2014, Dr. Hanna relocated to the small town of Menouf, Egypt, to establish a 5-year residency training program in General Surgery at Harpur Memorial Hospital. The goal is to train Egyptian residents to a level equal to that of a North American resident. In turn, graduating surgeons would be able to train others in a sustainable high quality, surgical residency program. The general surgery program at Harpur Memorial Hospital is the only PAACS program in Egypt, North Africa, or the Middle East. God continues to work mightily through the PAACS program at Harpur. In Dr. Hanna's own words, the impact is immeasurable!

Pediatric Surgery in Kenya and Ethiopia

Dr. Dan Poenaru, a Canadian pediatric surgeon, joined the fledgling PAACS group in 2000. When he arrived with his family as full-time missionaries to Kenya in 2003, he immediately opened a pediatric surgical rotation for PAACS residents at AIC Kijabe Hospital. Then in 2007 Kijabe started

the first pediatric surgical training program in East Africa under the auspices of PAACS and COSECSA (College of Surgeons of Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa). This fellowship has currently graduated 8 pediatric surgeons, all serving God in their countries of origin (Madagascar, Ethiopia, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Cameroon, and Rwanda). The training program continues 13 years later under several great PAACS missionary program directors,



Dr. Dan Poenaru and Dr. Frehun Ayele at MCM Hospital in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

continuing to train godly surgeons for the physical and spiritual needs of Africa.

After leaving Kenya in 2011, Dan moved to Ethiopia to support the work of Dr. Frehun Ayele, PAACS '11 graduate, in Addis Ababa, until 2014. He now works in academic surgical practice and research in Montreal.

To learn more about PAACS visit www.paacs.net, and for more stories from Africa follow us on Facebook and Twitter. You can also contact Deb Pedziwol, Director of Partnership Development, at 423-612-1045 or deborah.pedziwol@paacs.net.