

St. Luke's Hospital

Information for student nurses and midwives.



Programmes offered: Primary Health Care, General Tropical Medicine.

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1.St. Luke's Hospital – Its history

Anglican Missionaries arrived in Malawi in 1861 from the neighbouring Mozambique/Tanzania, which formed one diocese known as the Diocese of Western Tanganyika under the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA). The Anglican Diocese of Southern Malawi was established in the year 1971. The Rt. Rev. Bishop Donald Arden was the first to lead the Diocese. Since then several Bishops have led the Diocese in the years from 1976 up to our present Arch Bishop Brighton Malasa.

St. Luke's Hospital was established in the 1940's as a centre for ill Anglican Missionaries. It was situated on the Malosa Mountain where the air was cool and free of mosquitoes. In 1964 the present hospital was constructed in the Chilema plain, this making it accessible to all in need of health care. Further expansion took place in 1976 with the building of the Children's ward, Out Patient department, maternity and administration block with pharmacy. The nursing school was built in 1972. Renovations in 1985 brought the hospital to the capacity of 145 beds and the completion of the new TB-ward in 2000 gave it the capacity of 156 beds.

St Luke's Hospital is part of the Medical Department of the Diocese of Upper Shire. Eight Health Centres, spread over Mwanza-, Zomba-, Mangochi and Machinga districts are also part of the medical department.

2. The internship

2.1. Timetable

The tropical internship lasts 6 to 20 weeks.

Your first few days will be spent in the nursing school after which you will be introduced in the hospital. We are a small hospital and it shouldn't take long to know your way around the different departments and become familiar with the staff.

As a student nurse you will divide your internship equally over the different departments (male, female, paediatric and maternity). As at midwife you will spend your time in the maternity ward. You will work together with the nurses and midwives on the department. Your supervision and evaluation will be done by the nurses and midwives in the hospital.

During the internship you will have the opportunity to participate in primary health care. You can, for example, join the clinical/medical officer on a doctors visit to one of the health centres. It is also worthwhile to join a local Community Based Organisation providing Home Based Care for chronically ill patients in the villages.

We try to follow the protocols of the university hospital in Blantyre and general Malawian Treatment guidelines as much as possible and digital copies of these will be provided at arrival.

2.2. Evaluation and Learning Objectives

Evaluation will happen throughout the internship through the nursing school. During and based on the introduction and interim evaluation we expect you to formulate individualized learning objectives (general as well as department based objectives) you want to focus on during your internship. These objectives should be discussed with your supervisor.

The work and setting can be quite impressive sometimes, the MO therefor is always willing to discuss difficult situations or personal issues in-between evaluation moments.

2.3. Preparing for the internship

We advise you to read all this information carefully so that you are well prepared on this internship. We also advise you to read about some of our most common tropical diseases: Malaria, HIV/AIDS, TB, schistosomiasis and other parasite infections. You can use the above mentioned protocols from Blantyre.

2. 4. Useful books/ Malawian Protocols

These mentioned protocols might be updated again, or on a different website. Try to find the most recent guidelines. If they are different than mentioned below, than please contact the authors of this document.

Malawi treatment Guidelines

<https://apps.who.int/medicinedocs/documents/s23103en/s23103en.pdf>

Hospital care for children - WHO

http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/documents/child_hospital_care/en/

>> also available as app via App-store or Play Store

Malawian integrated Guidelines for HIV

https://aidsfree.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/malawi_art_2016.pdf

Malawian TB guidelines

<https://www.medbox.org/malawi-national-tuberculosis-control-programme-manual/download.pdf>

Malawian Malaria Guidelines

<https://www.severemalaria.org/sites/mmv-smo/files/content/attachments/2017-03-03/Malawi%202013%20Edition%20of%20Malaria%20Treatment%20Guidelines.pdf>

Open Guidelines – Pediatric and Child Health department, Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Blantyre, Malawi. (App, available via App store or Play store)

2.5. Nursing Council Malawi

As a foreign student you are obligated to be registered with the Nursing Council in Malawi. This process will be arranged by the nursing school.

3. Health care system in Malawi and St Luke's Hospital

3.1. Different types of clinicians in Malawi

The team of clinicians consists of two Medical Officers (MO), 7 Clinical Officers (CO), 3 anaesthetic Clinical Officers and 6 Medical Assistants (MA).

A medical officer is a general doctor who graduated from university and has not specialised. The MO's in St. Luke's have done a specialisation for AIGT (doctor in global health and tropical medicine) in the Netherlands (one year of surgery or paediatrics, one year of gynaecology and a 3 months course on tropical diseases and Public Health).

A clinical officer is a clinician who has had a 4-year training after secondary school. In the past Malawi did not have a medical university and the system relied on clinical officers. Most of the time they are well experienced, familiar with the common pathology and work independently in the wards, the out patient department (OPD), and the theatre. In our hospital they are sharing the same call schedules and duties as a MO.

The medical assistants have had a training of 2 years after secondary school. They work as first-line healthcare providers which means they are the ones who see the patient first at the OPD and new admissions during the nights and weekends, supervised by MO or CO. Also the MA first sees problems on the wards during the night and weekend.

The team of nurses consists of 75 nurse/midwives. Nurse/midwives have had a 3 to 4 year training in general nursing as well as in midwifery. They work throughout the hospital to support the clinical team. In the labour ward they independently handle uncomplicated deliveries.

We have daily meetings (morning handover report at 7.30 am) to discuss new admissions and difficult patients.

3.2. Diagnostic tools at St Luke's Hospital

At St Luke's we have a laboratory that does simple haematology and chemistry tests of blood specimens, urine, cerebrospinal fluid, faeces, pleural and ascites tapplings. Unfortunately, the reagents are not always available and the investigations then cannot always be done. Cultures cannot (yet) be performed. We have an X-ray machine and an ultrasound scanning machine.

4. Accommodation

We provide you with a room either in the student's house on the hospital compound or with a small house in Chilema, a nearby village. The rooms are provided with basic furniture a cooker or hotplate and cooking utensils.

The water comes from the mountain, which is drinkable if you filter it, and the reliability of electricity varies with the season.

5. Malosa

5.1. Situation

St Luke's Hospital is situated in Malosa, a small village 26 km north of Zomba on the main road to Liwonde. The village is actually small, but with the hospital and the Malosa Secondary School, it is quite well known throughout the country. Malosa is also the bus stop where the minibuses from Zomba turn round, and in Zomba you always hear the conductors of the minibus shouting: "Malosa, Malosa" to indicate their destination.

5.2. Climate

Malosa lies at an altitude of 650 meters above sea level. The rainy season usually starts end of November and lasts until March. In the rainy season there is usually heavy rainfall for a few hours per day or night and sunshine in between. You can buy good and cheap umbrellas everywhere in Malawi. Because of the humidity and temperatures of around 30 degrees Celsius, it can be rather hot. From April till June it is dry and warm. Then in July and August it is dry and cold. Make sure that you bring some warm clothes, because temperatures can drop to 10 degrees at night. Then from September till November it becomes very hot and very dry.

5.3. Language

The most common language spoken in this area of Malawi is Chichewa, a Bantu language. There are also a significant number of Yao speakers. Hospital staff also speak English, but patients usually do not.

5.4. Shopping in Malosa

Do not expect too much of the village. There is a simple market where you can always buy tomatoes, onions, and depending on the season you can buy other fruit and vegetables like cucumber, aubergine, carrots, mangos, oranges, pineapples. You can buy meat at the Malosa market, but it does not look very appetising, and might give you a nasty 'tummy-bug'. There is a tiny 'superette' where you can buy basic groceries like bread, milk powder, peanut butter, lemonade and soft drinks, soap, candles, matches etc. For bigger shops and an excellent market you can go to Zomba.

5.5. Entertainment at Malosa

As mentioned earlier: do not expect too much from Malosa. It gets dark at around 6 pm and there is not much social life in the evenings.

As for sightseeing: you should visit the Chilema tree. It's about a 20 minute walk from the hospital and is quite famous. It is a big tree with many branches and roots and looks as if they are actually several trees that are intertwined. Legends suggest that if pregnant women have obstructed labour, they should go to the Chilema tree and will be assisted by some magical power.

There are several churches around the hospital. You might want to visit a church service. The services are in Chichewa and they usually take a few hours, but there is a lot of singing and dancing.

5.6. Sports and activities at Malosa

The area around the hospital compound is good for walking and jogging. You can walk up to the dam, which is about a 45 minutes walk up the Malosa Mountain. If you walk a bit further up the mountain, you will reach an idyllic waterfall. You can also climb the mountain all the way to the top. You should be able to reach the top in a few hours, but you need to take a guide, as there is no proper path and it is easy to get lost.

If you enjoy sports like badminton, football, volleyball, bring rackets, balls etc. your housemates or maybe the clinical officers will probably join in!

If you want to go for a swim at the weekend, there is a swimming pool at the International Primary School in Zomba and at Hippo View Lodge in Liwonde. If you like hiking, Zomba Plateau is a place where you can easily spend several weekends.

6. Communication

6.1. Telephone

There is no telephone at the doctors house. We advise you to bring your cell phone from home, because you can use it with a Malawian SIM card. Make sure that you unlock the SIM-lock (you can also do this in Lilongwe or Blantyre).

There are 2 mobile network providers: Airtel and TNM. Here at St Luke's Airtel's network seems to work better.

You can buy prepaid cards for your phone everywhere, which can be used to buy an affordable 4G internet bundle as well . It is expensive to make phone calls with your cell phone, but it is cheap to send text messages or do whats-app calls.

If your family cannot reach you on your cell phone and they need to speak to you, they can call the hospital on their general numbers or one of the MO's (see first page).

6.2. Internet

There is access to Internet when you use a dongle with an Airtel or TNM card in your laptop. You can recharge the cards like you recharge your phone.

There are no commercial Internet café's or WIFI hotspots in Malosa. The closest is in Zomba where internet is cheaper and faster than at the hospital.

6.3. Post

The postal address is

St Luke's Hospital
PO Box 21
Chilema – Zomba
Malawi

Usually it takes about 2 weeks for letters from Netherlands to arrive. Parcels often take longer and are sometimes opened at customs.

Sending post from Malawi to Netherlands usually takes about 3 weeks.

There are usually many people travelling to the Netherlands, and you can give them letters/postcards to post there (so they arrive within a few days). So bring Dutch stamps.

7. Other business

7.1. Travelling to Malosa

There are several airlines that fly to Malawi. The price of a ticket varies and it is worth finding out which one is cheapest. Malosa is closer to Blantyre than Lilongwe but there will be more choice of flights to Lilongwe. From Blantyre you can take a taxi to town and minibuses to Malosa. From Lilongwe you again take a taxi to the bus station and a bus to Blantyre (from where you can take a taxi or minibus to Malosa) or minibus to Malosa. However calculate unpredictably long and crowded journeys. More fast and convenient it is to take a direct taxi.

Reliable taxi driver:

- Based in Zomba: Austin (0999347469/0884402166) also on whatsapp, can pick you from Blantyre airport to Malosa for 35.000 MKW or from Lilongwe airport to Malosa for 70.000 MKW (march 2019)
- Based in Lilongwe: Boneface +265994551476 (also on whatsapp), can pick you from Lilongwe airport and bring you anywhere in Malawi.

7.2. Visa

At the moment it's possible to get a travelers visum at the Malawi border which will cost 75 dollar. However the Malawi government can change this policy at any time so make sure you are informed will as it could happen that you will have to request for a visum at the Malawi embassy in Brussels. When arriving in Malawi you only get a visa for a month. You will need to go to the Immigration Office in Zomba before your visa expires to have it extended or complete a form for a student visa and take it to Blantyre immigration office.

7.3. Money issues

The currency in Malawi is the Malawi Kwacha. 1 euro is about 825 MK at the moment (January 2019), but inflation is huge and rapid changes occur.

- Cash: it is easy to change euros, and at the Forex Bureaus, i.e. at the airport, you get good exchange rates.
- Credit Card: in the fancy hotels you can pay with your credit card. At some banks you can get money from the ATM machine with your creditcard. This costs you a lot of commission.
- Bankcard: at the National Bank and Standard Bank you can get money from the ATM machine with your bankcard (ABN Amro, Visa, Mastercard, Maestro).
The nearest bank is in Zomba.

- There is an ATM available at Lilongwe Airport, to get money right away when arriving at Malawi. However, service can be uncertain so it is advisable to take extra Dollars to cover first or unpredicted costs.

8. What to bring

8.1. For yourself

- Stethoscope (and other medical equipment, like eye-lamp, reflex hammer, pulse-oximeter etc.)
- Oxford Handbook of Tropical Medicine
- Sunscreen
- Mosquito repellent (containing DEET)
- Good torch and batteries (in case of power cuts)/solar lamp
- Clothes >> make sure you have some warm clothes since evenings and nights can be chilly especially during the winter months (May-September); skirts should be below the knee; T-shirts should cover the abdomen.
- Rain coat (during rainy season)
- Games, football etc.
- Reading books

8.2. What to bring for the hospital

Donations for the hospital are always very welcome. Please contact us what the current needs are before you start collecting items to take in the Netherlands. It would be unfortunate if you would use your valuable luggage space for goods we would not be able to use.

The 'St. Luke's foundation' in the Netherlands supports us, a.o. with medication transports. Their website is www.stlukes.nl. Student doctors are very welcome to contribute to the site with photos or columns. As the foundation completely relies on donor money, you or your friends or family could do a great job to support by donating an amount via the website.

9. Partners, friends, visitors

The period at St Luke's Hospital has to be regarded as just another internship. It is not allowed to take outsiders into the hospital without previous notice and agreement of the management team and SMO. There are guest rooms at Chilema (village at 10min walking distance from Malosa) available. Of course it is possible to link the internship with a holiday after you have finished the internship.

10. Some warnings

10.1 Working in the hospital

The work in the hospital can be quite impressive. At our male and paediatric ward the average mortality is 10 %, in female ward 5 % (2019 data). So death is not uncommon, and often related to poverty and/or HIV. The pathology is sometimes extensive because of a very late presentation. The Malawian culture can also surprise you. The work can be very satisfactory and beautiful, but also very hard. In this reality there is no place for medical tourism and you have to find a way to learn from what you see, while you are treating the patients and hospital staff with respect.

10.2. HIV

Prevalence of HIV in Malawi is estimated at 14 percent. In the wards more than 70% of the patients are HIV positive. This has great implications for those who are taking care of them. With the preventive measures the risk of transmission is very much reduced.

In the unfortunate event of exposure to HIV, the AMC has provided the hospital with a protocol and with Post Exposure Prophylaxis. It is important that if you have a needle stick injury you call the medical officer immediately. Read the accompanying protocol carefully and consult the secretary of the Department of Tropical Medicine of the AMC for further instructions.

10.3. Malaria

Malosa is situated in an endemic malaria area. The infection pressure is so high that if you don't take malaria-prophylaxis you will certainly get it. But consult your university for their advice on malaria and TB.

10.4. Road traffic

Malawi has a very high number of road traffic accidents. The condition of vehicles, roads, the standard of driving, and lack of regulations are all contributing factors to road accidents –both for drivers and pedestrians.

Some tips on prevention of accidents:

- Avoid travelling after dark
- Choose 'luxury' ways of travelling when there is an option (e.g. try to avoid travelling in the back of a pickup truck)
- Never sit on the roof of a moving vehicle
- Avoid overloaded busses or cars
- Do not get into a vehicle when you suspect the driver to have used alcohol, drugs or when a driver did not get enough sleep
- Under no circumstance drink alcohol and drive a car

10.5. Crime

Malawi is a very stable and peaceful country. People are friendly. Robberies, muggings and assaults are very rare. We do advise you not to walk alone at night in the bigger cities like Blantyre and Lilongwe, because occasionally tourists do get mugged. If it does happen, please, do not resist. It is not worth it.

Take care in markets, and bus stations, there are always pickpockets around.