Where there are smiles, there is Hope

Bridge2Aid clinical director Ian Wilson shares his experiences of using Smile-on educational programmes in his Tanzanian practice, the Hope Dental Centre

I want you to imagine trying to set up a new dental clinic in the middle of East Africa where hardly any resources exist for professional development, clinical audit and governance and the training of your dental nurse! This was the situation that we found ourselves in as Bridge2Aid when we opened Hope Dental Centre in October 2004. Being a commercial dental practice situated in the heart of Mwanza city and the hub of our operations we were able to provide quality dental services and use the profits generated to facilitate projects in local communities in partnership with the government of Tanzania. In those early days, when we had a small team, we recognised that to bring quality and sustainability we needed to ensure that the clinical team were being properly trained and responsible for good policies and procedures that are necessary to operate a busy and effective dental practice. Since that time, and with the help of many in the dental trade and profession, Hope Dental Centre has grown to be the effective and significant dental practice it is today, with a clinical and admin staff of nine people.

Our relationship with Smile-On has been invaluable as we have looked to train and develop our team to the highest possible standards. When Smile-On first donated the original copies of DNNET and Key Skills it allowed us to have access to a comprehensive resource whereby our trainee dental nurses had easy access to the information and skills required to develop themselves as dental nurses. The Key Skills format was invaluable for the professional development of our clinical team and allowed them to stay focused on the policies and procedures required in their clinical practice.

Even though we had the struggles of computer hardware not being available in the clinic and we often needed to do our training on laptops, we were still able to use these excellent resources for the training of the clinical team. At one stage Ian had the opportunity to speak...
at the annual conference of the Tanzanian Dental Association where he was able to profile both DNNET and Key Skills to the Chief Dental Officer, members of the Ministry of Health, Directors of private hospitals and private practitioners. The response was overwhelmingly positive and since that time we have been working with Smile-On resources, and it has given them the clinical information that they require to accurately talk to the patients either on the phone or in the reception area.

As Bridge2Aid and Hope Dental Centre are here in Mwanza, we want to say thank you to Smile-On for their enthusiasm and support of our work in Tanzania. Smile-On recognised where they could help specifically and over the years this has continued with advice, support and expertise. As the work of Hope Dental Centre continues to develop and expand I am continually excited about the opportunity to work together with Smile-On to see the clinical team trained to the highest standard possible. In turn, this will allow us to continue to provide the excellent care that our patients have come to expect.

On in a creative way whereby we might be able to see these resources in the hands of our dental colleagues working within developing nations. Within Hope Dental Centre we currently have the privilege of being able to use the new updated version of DNNET, Clinical Audit and Key Skills to regularly train and develop the dental team. During a recent training session one of our trainee nurses commented how helpful the explanation and video demonstrations were in the DNNET programme in helping her to understand the clinical standards that were expected of her. Both our Tanzanian dentist and therapist have benefitted from monthly meetings going over the aspects of Key Skills and this has subsequently allowed them to communicate their own high standards to other colleagues within the Tanzanian Dental Profession. What has also been interesting is that our administrative staff have sat in on some of the training sessions using Smile-On products are put into practice with positive results.

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