

# NEWS FROM THE BU



Dear smartname,

The whirlwind month of June is behind us and incredible opportunities lie ahead. For years, we have traveled to West Africa to conduct medical missions. In June, we reversed that mindset and KBNF held a comprehensive mission *in* Vancouver. What a dynamic mission it was. Let me explain.

We invited our Ghanaian, Nigerian, and Liberian members of the KBNF Board of Directors to Vancouver for 10 days, to collaborate with neurosurgery leadership in British Columbia, meet with our Vancouver family and corporate sponsors, and conduct ground-breaking strategic planning. We accomplished in 10 days what in many aspects we have pursued for two decades.

Behind the scenes, it took a mammoth effort to facilitate visas for our members. We are grateful to our Canadian Ambassadors and diplomatic teams for assisting us in expediting the process. Our two Liberian members, Drs. Alvin Nah Doe and Ben Kolee were not issued their visas in time. To their credit, however, they actively participated via zoom every opportunity provided. That spoke volumes to all of us throughout this mission. Regardless of the hindrances, they rose above them all and demonstrated resilience and we look forward to hosting a visit hopefully in 2024. In the meantime ...

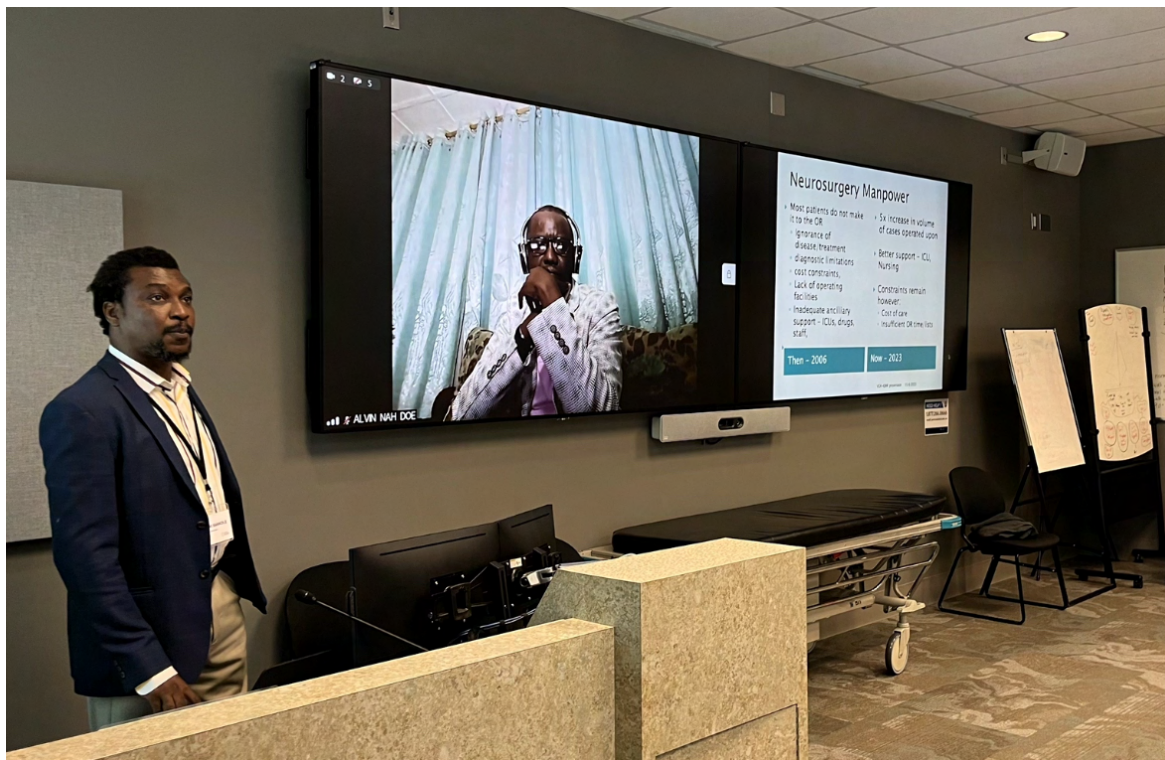
**Division of Neurosurgery Academic Day, held on campus at Vancouver General Hospital (VGH), was an amazing historic day for us all.** It met with incredible anticipation; anticipation that did not disappoint. Members of our British Columbian neurosurgery faculty, including Prof. Chris Honey, UBC Chief of Neurosurgery and KBNF mission neurosurgeon, Prof. Gary Redekop, VGH Chief of Surgery, neurosurgeon and neuro-interventionalist, and Dr. Faizal Haiji, Children's Hospital pediatric neurosurgeon took the lead in collaboration, advancing the cause of West African neurosurgery expansion. Prof. Felix Durity, KBNF Director Emeritus, was in attendance and

expressed his amazement at the mutual accomplishments of our foundation and West African surgeons over the past decade.



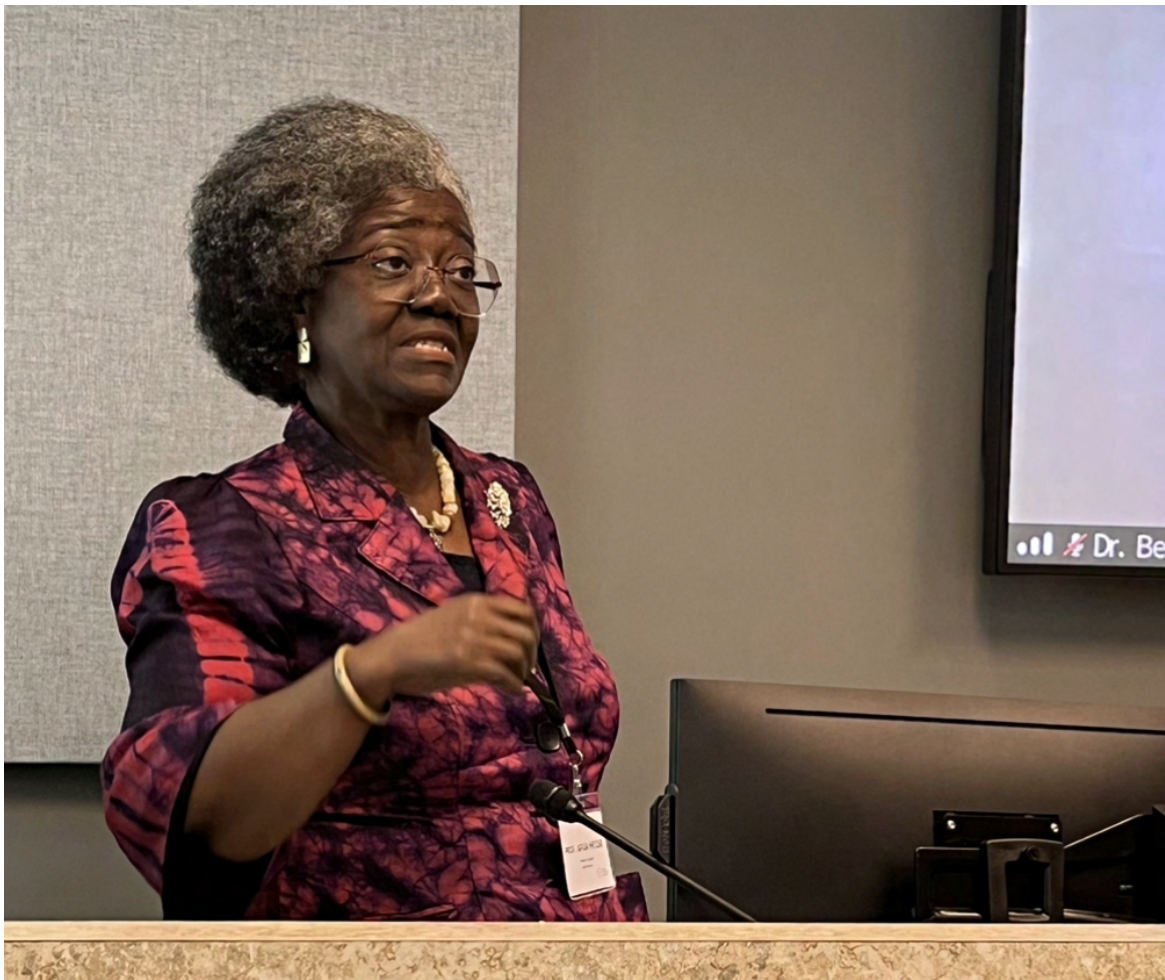
*Academic Day was an amazing historic day. Pictured from left to right here are: Prof. Gary Redekop, VGH Chief of Surgery, Dr. Femi Bankole, Head of Neurosurgery at Lagos University Teaching Hospital in Nigeria, Marj Ratel, president of KBNF, Dr. Harry Akoto, Acting Medical Director of Korle Bu Teaching Hospital in Ghana, Dr. Faizal Haiji, pediatric neurosurgeon Children's Hospital in Vancouver.*

Outcomes of Academic Day included inspiring messages from our West African neurosurgeons and equally passionate responses from our BC neurosurgeons. Drs. Harry Akoto (Ghana), Femi Bankole (Nigeria), and Alvin Nah Doe (Liberia) described the challenges they face daily and how they achieve heroic surgical feats in spite of inadequate surgical tools and resources. Expensive and quality reusable surgical sets, drills, and tools are a challenge to acquire. Efforts are now underway to help in this regard.



*Dr. Femi Bankole, Associate Professor at the College of Medicine University of Lagos and Head of Neurosurgery at Lagos University Teaching Hospital, Nigeria shared some of the challenges he faces daily with Dr. Alvin Nah Doe looking on.*

Fellowships and observerships in British Columbia will be pursued in earnest while KBNF neurosurgery missions to West Africa will be re-energized by VCH and BC Children's Hospital neurosurgeons and neurosurgery residents. Surgery staff and head nurses are coming alongside to partner. Expansion across the province's other neurosurgery services is now on its way.



*Dr. Afua Hesse, co-founder of the Ghana College of Medicine shared her thoughts and experiences during Academic Day. We are so blessed as we continue to build an amazing family,*

Prof. Afua Hesse, renowned in her field, shared her experiences serving Ghana as their sole pediatric surgeon for five years in the 1990's, while focusing in her later career on the critical need for training medical doctors. In recent years, Prof and her husband Dr. Adukwei Hesse cofounded the premiere Ghana College of Medicine (GCM) that is training contemporary physicians. Two graduates are currently pursuing careers in neurosurgery. Dr. Ben Kolee, Liberia's founding and chief pathologist, delivered an eloquent message, providing frontline insights while encouraging collaboration.

**One of the reveals is that while the western world has much to share educating and training abroad, our African counterparts have much to teach us as well.** One area of enlightenment was in the field of functional neurosurgery, a specialty not performed in Sub-Sahara Africa—actually rarely throughout the continent. The thought has been that there is not enough need for it, however, our KBNF neurosurgeons challenged that notion, identifying that individuals with disabilities requiring intervention simply do not approach physicians due to the knowledge that care is simply not available. Now Prof. Honey is rethinking expansion in his specialty.

We continue to build an amazing family.

**Observerships**

Drs. Akoto and Bankole were warmly hosted by the VGH neurosurgeons as they appreciated observing numerous surgeries in state-of-the-art neurosurgical suites during their stay. I could feel the birth of friendships formed and cultivated over the many days of their stay.



*Dr. Faizal Haiji (left), pediatric neurosurgeon at Children's Hospital in Vancouver and Dr. Femi Bankole, head of neurosurgery at Lagos University Teaching Hospital in Nigeria in conversation during a hospital tour and exploration of how we can innovate sustainable collaboration.*

## **AGM**

KBNF, including our three sister foundations held our Annual General Meetings all on June 17. This was, again, a time of intense preparation, creating comprehensive reports for public consumption to reveal all the work accomplished during the previous year.

Dr. Jocelyne Lapointe, president of Excellence in Neuroscience and Health since 2014, will be concluding her presidency in 2024. KBNF could not function without Jocelyne and we will continue to be blessed by her active involvement in the years ahead.



*Dr. Jocelyne Lapointe has served as the president of Excellence in Neuroscience and Health since 2014. She's a treasured part of our KBNF family and a hero in our books.*

We welcomed Dr. Femi Bankole, Chief Neurosurgeon, Lagos University Teaching Hospital, and annual neurosurgery mission team leader as he graciously accepted the unanimously elected position of KBNF Board of Director.



*These wonderful members of our KBNF family were some of the attendees at the AGM at Marj's house in June. They are from left to right: Dr. Afua Hesse, KBNF Board Director; Marj Ratel, KBNF President, Brad Ratel; KBNF Board Director; Amanda Huizing, KBNF Board Treasurer; Rose Woller, KBNF Executive Director; Darren Schemmer, former Board Director; Aaron Fedora, KBNF Board Director and Robert Ahomka-Lindsay, Board Director.*

### **Board Retreat–A Game Changer**

Our retreat mandated two priorities: one, resolution on relocating to a new home to serve as our warehouse and headquarters beyond 2024 and two, to consider expansion of a cutting-edge, KBNF owned and managed medical city complex, built in Liberia to serve as a leader centre for Liberia, West and Sub-Sahara Africa. Suffice to say, as our mandate evolves, we are needing everyone's collective support more than ever.



*Pictured are several of the KBNF Board Directors who attended the Board Retreat in June. From left to right are: Dr. Harry Akoto, Ross Dickinson, Dr. Jocelyne Lapointe, Robert Ahomka-Lindsay, Marj Ratel, Brad Ratel, Dr. Femi Bankole, Dr. Afua Hesse, Danny Moe, Aaron, Fedora.*

**Retreat priority 1:** We must have a suitable Vancouver home base to continue to meet the needs of our medical services in West Africa. Our team is pursuing corporate sponsors while determining leasing and/or purchasing of land for future occupation. It's the how-to, in order to accomplish this mandate, that is a critical challenge. Since we have been the recipient of timely warehousing space in the past, this will undoubtedly require divine intervention. We require significant expansion of funding and I encourage everyone to donate monthly towards our new home. Every contribution is valuable towards the whole.

**Retreat Priority 2:** Branching out to wholly launch and embrace the construction of a leading teaching hospital within a heart-powered city, is epic. This centre would be unique, disciplined, heart-powered (compassionate), built and administrated with excellence, set new standards for health care delivery, attract quality specialists from around the world, and deliver world-class university education, all serviced in a state-of-the-art city.

We are grateful for Dr. Dan Miulli, KBNF mission neurosurgeon from Arrowhead Regional Medical Centre, Colton, California, who enthusiastically joined us for the trailblazing discussions.

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*Dr. Dan Miulli, KBNF mission neurosurgeon flew in from Arrowhead Regional Medical Centre in Colton, California for the Board Retreat.*

Also joining us via zoom was the Minister of Justice, Honorable Frank Musa Dean Jr. and Minister of Health, Honorable Dr. Wilhemina Jallah, officially endorsing the opportunity for KBNF to develop a 1,000 acre+ medical city on nationally donated land.

We welcomed (via zoom) former KBNF hospital architects and health planners Lynne Webster and Kaien Shimizu as well as Prof. Aaron Lawson, who oversaw the construction of the University of Ghana Medical Centre. Another expert in our midst was KBNF Board of Director Anders Engstrom, Campus Project Manager for Sahlgrenska University Hospital, Sweden.

The concept of a medical city complex was unanimously approved by the board and the adventure has just begun. We will keep you posted on developments, as vision, mission, strategic plan, values, functional program and business plan are currently being established.

— “

The concept of a medical city complex (in Liberia) was unanimously approved by the Board and the adventure has just begun.

—Marj Ratel

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### **KBNF Gala**

KBNF hosted our inaugural gala, held at Mintara Restaurant on Burnaby Mountain. We principally chose this location due to the breathtaking view it provides of Vancouver, including the inner harbor, world famous Stanley Park, and the North Shore Mountain range. The evening did not disappoint, as we were privy to an incredible sunset with totem poles framing the spectacular view. I recall Harry Akoto, sitting silently alone at the end of the evening. He shook his head and shared how incredible the evening had been for him. That made it all worthwhile.



*From left to right: Dr. Harry Akoto, Acting Medical Director of Korle Bu Teaching Hospital and neurosurgeon in Ghana, Dr. Chris Honey, UBC Chief of Neurosurgery and KBNF mission neurosurgeon and Dr. Femi Bankole, Associate Professor at the College of Medicine University of Lagos and Head of Neurosurgery at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital in Nigeria during the panel discussion at the KBNF Gala Dinner:*



*From left to right: Dr. Harry Akoto, Dr. Femi Bankole, Ronald E. Harrison and Sandy Harrison.*

In conclusion, I am truly grateful for all our Board of Directors that took the time and expense to travel to Vancouver, sacrificially. Robert Ahomka-Lindsay, former Ghanaian Deputy of Industry brings business acumen to our KBNF family like no other and brought his depth of knowledge in many ways including helping to fundraise at the Gala and during his stay. Kristina Faulkner traveled from Edmonton and devoted several days to ensuring that our Gala and events were a success. Rose Woller gave every ounce of energy to ensuring we had what was needed at every event including a magnificent turkey dinner! And considering that our retreat was held on Father's Day, our Board of Directors and their families sacrificed this special day for KBNF.



*From left to right: Kristina Faulker, KBNF Board Director, Sue Dickson and Rich Baerg, KBNF Board Director.*



*From left to right: Rose Woller, KBNF Executive Director; Robert Ahomka-Lindsay, former Deputy of Industry in Ghana and Idelette McVicker, KBNF Volunteer & Admin Coordinator.*



*KBNF President Marj Ratel (on left) is pictured here with Prof. Felix Durity, KBNF Director Emeritus and recipient of the Order of British Columbia, with (on right) Margaret Durity, former Clinical Nurse Specialist, Neuroscience and KBNF educator.*

Thank you all for being a part of our precious family. You are all Heroes.

Love, Marj

## PLEASE NOTE:

The KBNF  
warehouse in  
Surrey will be  
closed from  
Aug. 21-28.

# NEXT VOLUNTEER SATURDAY

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9  
10am-2pm



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