

NEWS FROM THE BU



Dear smartname,

What a month! On Monday, June 12, our KBNF family from Ghana and Nigeria and our honored guests —Afua Hesse, Femi Bankole, Harry Akoto and Robert Ahomka-Lindsay—landed in Vancouver for a groundbreaking trip. During their whirlwind visit, they met with Faizal Haji, pediatric neurosurgeon at BC Children's Hospital, spent a neurosurgery academic day at UBC, hosted by Prof. Chris Honey, had OR observerships with VGH neurosurgeons, including Dr. Makarenko and Dr. Redekop. Then, on Friday evening, we celebrated with a beautiful Gala Dinner on top of Burnaby Mountain.

This month, we are focusing our newsletter on highlighting 10 significant moments in this groundbreaking trip. Pour a cup of something delicious and enjoy this KBNF Special Delegation Edition of our newsletter.

1. WE FIND THE CHAMPIONS. -Marj Ratel



During her heartfelt speech at the KBNF Gala Dinner, Marj reminded us of the essence of Korle-Bu. She often gets asked, "What do you contribute your success to? And this is what she says: "Well ... we find the champions. When we find the champions, we grab ahold of them and they become family."

She highlighted some of the champions Korle-Bu has the privilege of working with, including Harry Akoto, Femi Bankole and Alvin Nah Doe.

She remembered the conversation with Alvin Nah Doe during his residency when he said to her: "Marj, I'm graduating from my program in Senegal, but I don't think I can come back to Liberia to practice neurosurgery ... I won't have any tools."

She responded, "Alvin, I promise you, if you come back to Liberia, we will partner with you. You will never be alone."

Since that moment, KBNF has shipped countless container shipments to help build neurosurgery in Liberia.

We find the champions.





Prof. Afua Hesse, pediatric surgeon and co-founder and president of the Accra College of Medicine in Ghana, opened the speeches during the Gala Dinner at Mintara restaurant. She reminded us that one day we will be asked, "What did you do with that which I gave you to do?"

At the age of four, she announced that she was going to be a pediatric surgeon. "I didn't know what it meant," she laughed. "When I was able to achieve that dream, it was obviously what God wanted me to do ..." After her post-graduate education in the UK, it was clear to her that she was meant to go back home to Ghana. "It was a lot of work," she added. "But when you're starting something, when you're intending to do something, God does it with you and God will give you the people along the way that will help you along."

"We have a saying in one of our languages," she added. "Nothing is too small."

"There's nothing that you can do to add on, to help someone, that is ever too little; too small."

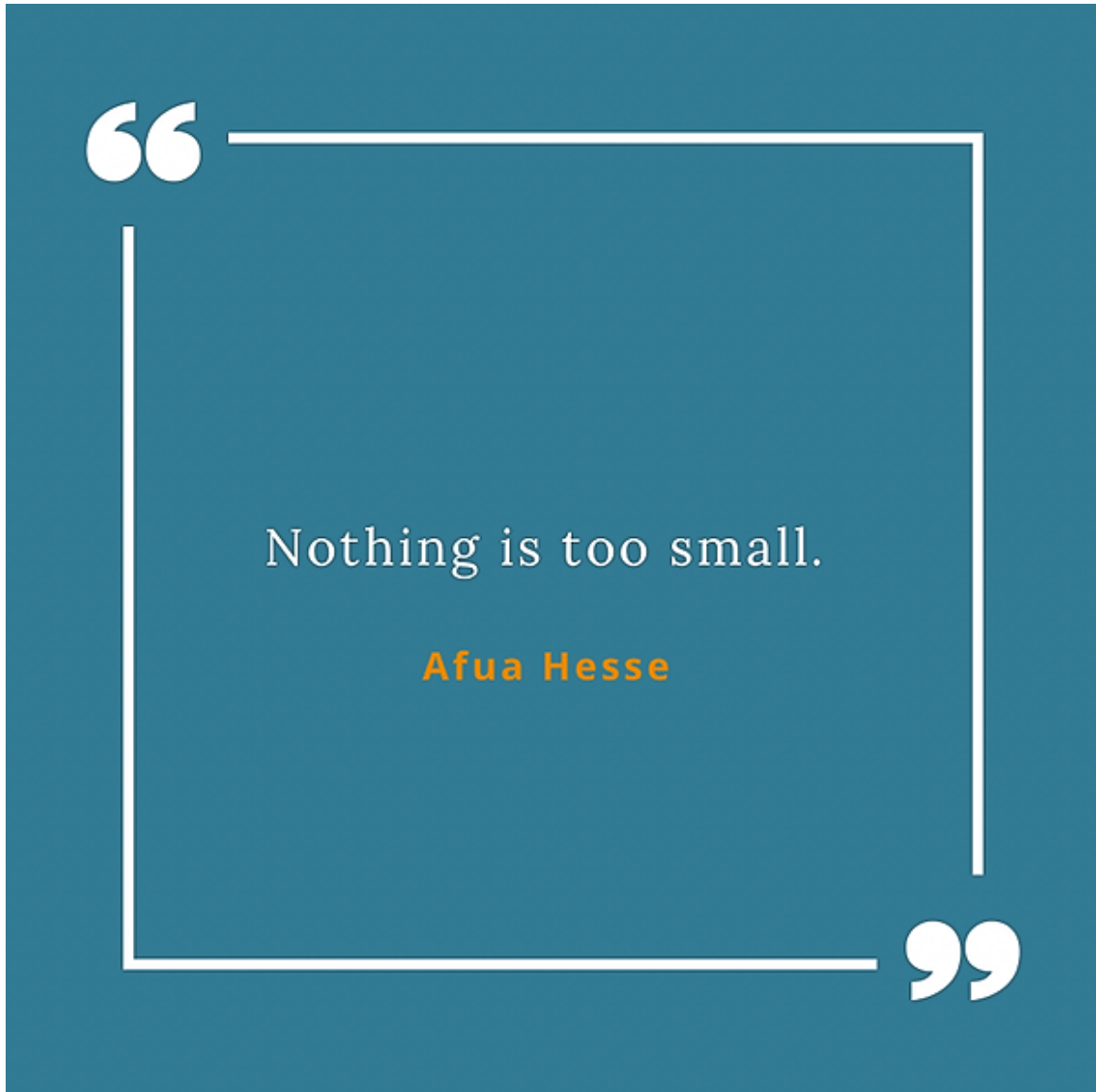
Training

Afua remembered how she started practicing all alone and training others became very important to her. "So, I have trained—and I continue to train across West Africa—pediatric surgeons who will take over," she said. With KBNF's emphasis on training, Afua sees how neurosurgeons are motivated to joining KBNF, "because the need is so great across Africa."

"We are the ones who have to help," Afua added. "Others will come and hold our hands, but ultimately, we are responsible for doing it."

We know that transforming the landscape of neurosurgery takes time. "It's a long journey," Afua added, "but every step counts. So, thank you for coming along on this journey with us and I trust you'll be able to do everything you can to support KBNF achieve its dream of expanding neurosurgical services, and not just any kind, but first-class neurosurgical services to the whole of West Africa."

Nothing is too small.



3. HEART POWER AT THE GALA DINNER

On the evening of June 16, we filled the room at Mintara restaurant on Burnaby mountain. The KBNF community, along with the local medical and business communities, rallied in a beautiful way and showed up to greet our special delegation of neurosurgeons from Ghana and Nigeria, raised funds and be in community together. This, too, was heart power in action.



4. PANEL DISCUSSION



Pictured from left to right: Harry Akoto, Chris Honey and Femi Bankole during the panel discussion at the KBNF Gala Dinner.

“

You probably have more neurosurgeons in this city than I have in the whole of Ghana. We have only 25 neurosurgeons for a population of 33 million. We need to support each other, so we can build up on this, because those lives also matter.

Harry Akoto

”

I went to Ghana in 2012
and Liberia a few years
later. I had the mindset
at that time of telling
you what you need.
What we've realized
over the years, is that
we have to listen to
what you need and
then try and provide it.

DR. CHRIS HONEY



5. NEUROSURGERY ACADEMIC DAY AT VGH / UBC



On Thursday, June 15, our visiting neurosurgeons spent a day at VGH, giving presentations, rekindling partnerships and dreaming of how we can partner together in the future. Pictured here are from left to right: Dr. Gary Redekop, Chief of Surgery at Vancouver General Hospital (VGH), Dr. Femi Bankole, Chief of Neurosurgery at Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), Dr. Harry Akoto, Acting Medical Director at Korle Bu Teaching Hospital and Dr. Faizal Haji, pediatric neurosurgeon at BC Children's Hospital. Below on left is Dr. Afua Hesse, pediatric surgeon and president of the Accra College of Medicine in Ghana, presenting at VGH. On the right is Dr. Harry Akoto.



So, what do I want? I just want it to be today; not the 1950s. I want equipment. I want training. That's all I ask. How do I get that? So far, KBNF has proven to be resourceful to provide us some of what we want ... Let's support each other as we walk on.

DR. HARRY AKOTO

6. VISIT TO BC CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL



On Tuesday, June 13, the visiting delegation got to meet with Faizal Haji, pediatric neurosurgeon at BC Children's Hospital, who is eager to support neurosurgery education and training. Here Faizal (on left) is pictured with Femi (on right.)

7. VISIT TO K-BRO LINEN



On Wednesday, June 14, our delegation and KBNF family spent an informative afternoon at K-Bro Linen, a state-of-the-art hospital linen facility.



Femi looking at the loaded bins of sterilized OR linens at K-Bro Linen.

8. LUNCH WITH THE ASANTE'S



On Wednesday, June 14, Prof. Kojo Asante (pictured middle, front) and his wife, Gail (pictured front on the right), hosted a special luncheon for our delegation and KBNF family. Prof. Asante is a KBNF Director Emeritus and a great supporter of KBNF and project development in Ghana.

9. WAREHOUSE VISIT + TURKEY DINNER



On Saturday, our special delegation got to visit the Korle-Bu warehouse in Surrey, meet with volunteers and staff and see where all the action happens. Then everyone enjoyed a delicious home-cooked turkey dinner.

10. BOARD RETREAT



On Sunday, June 18 through Monday June 19, the KBNF Board utilized the John Volken board room, planning, exploring and envisioning the next 3-5 years together, including the possibility of creating a master plan for a new hospital complex in Liberia.

Dear Korle-Bu family,

It has been a spectacular month. We were sad that our friends from Liberia—Alvin Nah Doe and Benedict Kolee—could not join us for this visit, but we look forward to hosting them another time. We are thrilled about the relationships and partnerships that were forged during this visit. One thing we heard clearly: the need is great, especially for training, supplies and equipment. As Afua Hesse said: "It's a long journey, but every step counts."

Nothing we contribute on this journey is too small. We value you, your friendship, support, generosity and time. Be sure to look for an update from Marj in our next newsletter.

Love,

Rose Woller
Executive Director

PS: Come join us for Volunteer Saturday on July 8 from 10am-2pm! We would love to see you.

[Donate Here](#)

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