

**DR ISAAC KIHURANI**

**FELLOWSHIP TRAINING IN EMERGENCY PEDIATRIC CARE AT RED CROSS WAR MEMORIAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL**

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I have always had a major interest in emergency care of children since my early working days as a medical officer in a rural provincial hospital in Kenya where I witnessed the difficulties and outcomes of resuscitating extremely ill children. It was extremely enlightening for me when I first trained in pediatric life support soon after the course was introduced in Kenya. It made such a huge difference in my approach to resuscitation in very ill children and fuelled my interest in the area of emergency care. I subsequently trained and participated in providing training to numerous other health care workers in my region through similar courses but felt I needed to venture further in the field. I hoped to make a bigger difference in the quality of care received by children requiring resuscitation in my setting.

I was therefore quite delighted on completing my Masters degree in Pediatrics when I found out that I could pursue further training in the area of emergency pediatric care at Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital (RCCH) in Cape Town, South Africa. I felt, based on discussions held with colleagues who had previously pursued fellowship training in other disciplines at the hospital that the institution would offer good training in a setting fraught with challenges similar to and beyond what we face in Kenya today in pediatric emergency care. I got in contact with the African Pediatric Fellowship Program (APFP) in February 2011 and began the long process towards commencing my fellowship training at RCCH. This journey would have been absolutely impossible without the level of support I received from the APFP both financially and logistically having secured a scholarship with them. I especially wish to thank Ms Avril Du Preez for her indefatigable support as an administrator with the APFP. I arrived in Cape Town in June 2012 and commenced my training then.

My one year training in pediatric emergency care covered many areas both clinical and administrative. I initially had to quickly learn a lot about the geographical and administrative systems in place at RCCH and the wider Western Cape health care model as this was key to my understanding of the process of emergency care provided to children in Cape Town region. I rotated through numerous disciplines and departments during my one year of training including:

1) Medical emergency unit:

I encountered an extremely wide array of medical emergencies in the so called "Med Reg" and short stay ward (S11) and was faced on numerous occasions by extremely ill children requiring resuscitation and initial stabilization. I also handled numerous consultation calls from different cadres of health care workers assisting children with various medical emergencies at numerous referring institutions in Cape Town. I learnt a lot from handling the computerized poison data base at the unit which caters for many other health care institutions in South Africa. I also participated in many journal clubs and morbidity/ mortality meetings. I am eternally grateful to my supervisors for the incredible support they offered me while at the unit. These include Dr Ralph Diedericks, Dr Heloise Buys and Dr Shirani Naidoo, a formidable team I must say! I also

wish to thank the many rotating registrars, house officers and nursing staff I was privileged to work with and learn from at the unit.

2) Pediatric trauma unit:

I encountered numerous pediatric trauma cases from variable etiologies both accidental and non-accidental at the unit. Pediatric trauma remains one of the leading causes of mortality in children above the age of five years. I wish to thank Prof. Sebastian Van As and all the unit staff for their valuable support in my learning experience there.

3) Pediatric anesthesia:

I received valuable practical insights into pediatric airway and vascular access plus sedation and analgesia techniques. The teaching enthusiasm exhibited by Prof. Thomas and the rest of the anesthesia and theatre fraternity remains inspiring. I truly enjoyed my learning experience at the department.

4) The Western Cape Metro EMS unit:

I was oriented through the world of transport and rescue medicine and the challenges therein as well as given sneak reviews into the organizational structure of disaster management at the unit. The rotation also offered an opportunity to see first-hand many of the health facilities that shared a referral system with RCCH putting into perspective my experiences at the medical emergency unit.

5) Neonatal ICU at Groote Schuur Hospital:

This rotation helped to consolidate my previous experience in neonatal resuscitation and offered interesting insights into management of complications arising from poor outcomes such as hypoxic ischemic encephalopathy amongst others. I wish to thank Dr Natasha Rhoda for facilitating my rotation there.

6) Pediatric ICU at RCCH:

The organizational structure, teaching and learning environment as well as overwhelming wealth of experience encountered in the PICU at RCCH was a real highlight for me. The long working hours and amazing array of conditions encountered there all melted into a rich learning experience for me. I wish to thank all the PICU staff and colleagues for this. I especially wish to thank Prof. Argent, Dr Salie, Dr Ahrens, Prof. Mignon and Dr Roussow for the amazing work they do in teaching and supporting and caring for critically ill children in the unit. Thank you.

During my one year training at RCCH, I also participated as a trainer in several three day Advanced Pediatric Life Support (APLS) courses as well as the one day Pediatric Life Support (PLS) courses for nursing officers. I also took part in the 2013 Pediatric Refresher Course as a trainer in one of the practical sessions. These experiences helped me to understand and appreciate different methods for teaching different cadres of staff various aspects of pediatric emergency care. I wish to mention Sister Jeanine (now retired) amongst the other fraternity and thank them for the opportunity to participate in these courses.

In summary, my one year fellowship training experience in Pediatric Emergency Care at RCCH was time and resources well spent and this can only portend better tidings for the children and medical fraternity I interact with in future. Thank you APFP.