

INSIGHT

Project
Southern Africa

Interim Report by Dr. Rossouw Els



The past few months have certainly been rewarding on multiple levels of my professional career. We continued the Sight Flight outreaches with Mercy Air providing sight saving surgical services to some the world's most disadvantaged communities. This has been my favourite medium as a rural health approach to these communities in need. Many of the cases were saving someone's sight that has only eye left. This changes the person entire life –

regaining a sense of independence and self-sufficiency is unquestionable. Without this service many such people will be left to go completely blind and unnecessarily dependent on family members straining the family unit already in destitution.

My ophthalmology training has been progressing very well since I started. The learning curve, although steep, has been most rewarding. Learning from previous trainees Dr Emma Johl has been integral in the beginning phases of my learning curve. I believe that programs such as these exemplify the importance and efficacy of peer-to-peer teaching. The knowledge gain, retention and implementation of skills is fastest learning from a fellow colleague. At the end of the day there is 'nothing like experience'

In July 2022 I passed the first section of the Diploma in Ophthalmology which would not have been possible without the experience I gained in the past few months. Much cannot be taught in textbooks, and this shone through during these challenging exams. The assistance received from Fight4Sight. has helped significantly as well.

Surgical training has been invaluable over the past few months. Being able to train side by side with the surgical trainer (Dr J Pons) lends itself to an environment which is very conducive towards an effective training setting for any surgeon. Being taught in real time and observing fellow colleagues and trainer via the video interface has been integral as well broadening and solidifying my surgical skills. I've reached a stage now where I am independently doing MSICS (manual small incision cataract surgery) and my next goal is to increase my case count as much possible. Many of these skills are transferable to other ocular surgeries which I have been embarking on.

As a previous trainee leaves new ones join! - and I now find myself in the occasional teaching position. Herein I develop my own teaching skills for colleagues and staff and is a motivating factor in furthering my own knowledge and skills.

The future poses itself to be exciting with outreaches continuing into rural Eswatini, South Africa, and Mozambique. These of course pose its own challenges ranging from language, equipment, and accessibility. I have realised in my career these environments often prove itself as leading to the most meaningful and rewarding aspects of being a doctor.

I'm grateful and excited for the challenges that lie ahead in the next phase of my ophthalmology training.

