

INSIGHT

Project
Southern Africa

First solo cataract surgery



Dear Flight4Sight and Mercy Air. Thank you very much for making the decision to support me with my time in Eswatini.

I am happy to report that on the 19th of July 2021 I have completed my first solo cataract surgery! This was a very exciting for me and a major mile stone!

My first patient was a homeless lady from the area of Siteki. She came to the hospital with a friend that helped her and she was desperate to see again. As soon as she heard that a surgery is possible she was willing the exchange her few worldly possessions for the surgery. Luckily because of sponsorship we could offer her the surgery free of charge. She was very nervous before and during the operation but she tried her best to be co-operative and not to move. The following day we removed her eye patch and her eyes filled with tears. She could not believe that it was possible but she could see again. Her operated eye now had a visual acuity of 6/18 (from light perception), which is likely to improve even more.

This story is like many others in the field of ophthalmology and it has motivated me even more to work harder! My passion has grown immensely to serve the poor who would not otherwise be able to have access any eye service.

Since then, I have completed a further 4 surgeries completely on my own. It has been a very steep learning curve for me with many hours spent with the practise microscope and plastic eyes. I am very lucky to have a great mentor Dr. J. Pons. He is a great teacher and very patient. We always discuss each case before starting and debrief afterwards to discuss where improvement should be made.

I was also due to write my diploma examination and primary examination in July 2021, unfortunately due to riots in South Africa that is now postponed to middle and end of August 2021.

I am happy to continue my journey here in Eswatini and to serve the people most in need.

Thank you
Arne Pretorius

