

Belief By Kevin Holmes

In December 2020, Dr. Brian Camazine's request for help began working its way through the Symmetry Surgical email system, and quickly found its way to my desk as the point person for charitable donations of electrosurgical equipment. Dr. Camazine leads Earthwide Surgical Foundation, which is based in St. Louis and has a mission 'To provide medical and surgical care to needful areas of the world by means of training, equipment and manpower'.

Instead of performing as many surgeries as he and each visiting surgeon could during their missionary trips, Dr. Cameron learned the impact of teaching the local surgeons. "While one surgeon can handle seven or eight operations per day and thousands of cases over decades of trips abroad, the real impact stems from teaching local Nigerian surgeons and staff, and equipping them to serve their own communities," stated Dr. Camazine.

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The work performed by Dr. Camazine and his team is nothing short of remarkable, from removing a giant cystic kidney the size of a Thanksgiving turkey (those are his words), to performing a transverse rectus abdominis (TRAM) flap during a double mastectomy, to performing a rare-as-it-sounds Whipple Procedure-pancreaticoduodenectomy for a pancreatic cancer patient. He enjoys taking on the most complex, confounding, and risky surgical cases with a 'we can accomplish anything' attitude.

"What started as a dream and an effort to heal just a few of our brothers and sisters who need it most has grown into one of the most forward-thinking, intrepid medical operations in the world – a mountain of good standing on a foundation of belief. It is our unwavering belief that has gotten us to where we are today, it is what will carry us forward, and we cannot thank our supporters enough for their continued belief in us." stated Dr. Brian Camazine.

For the 11 years that I have worked with Bovie products, equipment has been donated all around the world, to relief organizations such as Mercy Ships, Virtue Foundation, and Love in Action Mission, to name just a few. Symmetry Surgical has a significant commitment to charitable work, budgeting tens of thousand dollars per year for such donations. And after being rejected by some of the largest medical device companies in the world, Dr. Camazine had finally contacted the right company.

This Symmetry Surgical shipment's final destination would be the Nigerian Christian Hospital (NCH). Belief is the lifeblood of NCH and fuels its progress in helping people from across the country. A belief that they can do the impossible is perhaps the most core tenet of their efforts. Hundreds of lives have been saved and some of the most unsettling defects man has ever endured have been corrected in a single room with two operating tables.

"Belief is the lifeblood..."

The work they do would not be possible without generous support and contributions from institutions, family, and friends. NCH has come a long way since first opening in 1965 when the NCH founder, Dr. Henry Farrar, moved his family of seven from Lebanon, TN, to Nigeria as a lifelong dream of becoming a missionary surgeon, with the sole purpose of spreading the word of God by means of healing.

In 1985 Dr. Camazine connected with him because of his interest in serving the underserved. After an introductory meeting, the two were soon on their way to Nigeria – an experience that would change Dr. Camazine’s life forever and increase the effectiveness of the ministry.

When our shipment arrived Dr. Camazine's original request for one generator resulted in a shipment of nine, along with plenty of accessories. Perhaps Bovie products, the name synonymous with electrosurgery, should also be the name synonymous with generosity.

“Kevin, I just got home for the holidays. Came in to find your boxes and I truly cannot believe what all was sent. I cannot thank you and Symmetry Surgical enough. This is one of the best Christmases ever. I am on my way to Nigeria.” Stated Dr. Camazine via text.

Earthwide believes in the lasting power of teaching and giving everything so that future generations of Nigerians can live a better life. At present, NCH employs 200 individuals and attracts many of the toughest medical cases. The dream is that surgical talent and experience would be spread across the nation so that NCH is no longer the only shot that some patients have at survival. Dr. Camazine and his team firmly believe that the dream is achievable.

In 2020 Symmetry Surgical continued the tradition by responding not only to Dr. Camazine and the Earthwide Surgical Foundation, but also to groups like Samaritan’s Purse (Dr. Mona Mikalsen does relief work in Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, and has used our generators in the war-torn country of Syria) and American Medical Center (Dr. Reid Sheftall has used our equipment to perform complicated surgeries in Cambodia). In all, 55 generators were donated last year. With organizations like these, it is always easy to respond.

I enjoy being able to help organizations like Earthwide Surgical Foundation, and I cannot be any prouder of Symmetry Surgical. With a culture that is truly remarkable, and employees at every level - from executive leadership on down - that are a pleasure with whom to work, within a truly unique organization. And I believe it shows most strongly in our generous donations and our dedication to helping our fellow neighbors all over the world.