



Celebrating Critical Care Week

Thank you for all the work you do, E-3, E-4, CCU

Backus Hospitell

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Backus surgeon travels to Africa on humanitarian mission

This week 45-50 patients with spinal deformities, some as young as 2 years old, will receive life-changing spinal surgery. Embarking on his seventh volunteer trip since 2005, Kenneth Paonessa, MD, will join nearly a dozen surgeons from around the world to provide comprehensive orthopedic and spinal care to underserved communities in Ghana and throughout West Africa.

Volunteering with the Foundation for Orthopedics and Complex Spine (FOCOS) founded by Dr. Oheneba Boachie-Adjei in 1988, FOCOS recruits clinicians globally to provide these much needed operations twice a year where some patients will travel as far as 3,000 miles from other countries in Africa such as Ethiopia or Sierra Leone to receive treatment.

"Many patients have spinal deformities at birth, from injury or disease that could have been easily treated in developed countries, but get progressively worse and more painful as they grow, affecting not only their ability to walk but their ability to breathe as well," said Dr. Paonessa. "Having experienced a reduction in their quality of life, it's rewarding to see these patients so appreciative of the surgery which has allowed them to return to school or work."

The debilitating impact of these neglected medical conditions is exacerbated by the shortage of skilled medical doctors, with only 12 orthopedic surgeons and eight neurosurgeons currently serving 50-60 million people in West Africa.

See *AFRICA*, page 7



Dr. Kenneth Paonessa, second from right, collaborates with doctors from Ghana, Africa to improve the quality of life for patients in need of spinal surgery.



Patient rounding gets BRIGHT honors

It stands to reason that the more time nurses spend with their patients, the better versed those nurses will be in their patients' needs.

That's the working theory behind a new approach to patient rounding that's being implemented on A-4, and it's also the reason why A-4 Clinical Director Daryl Hurlock, RN; Director of Performance Improvement Ellen Crowe, RN, BSN; and the entire staff of A-4 are the recipients of the BRIGHT Award for the month of May.

"It's all about getting nurses to the bedside," Ms. Hurlock said. "This way there is no discrepancy between what they think is going on and what is really going on."

This experimental protocol involves a three-pronged approach to keeping tabs on patients using a bedside report, hourly rounding, and interdisciplinary discharge rounds.

The bedside report involves the handoff of pertinent information from the outgoing nurse to the incoming nurse as shifts change. This is done at the bedside so not

See *BRIGHT*, page 4

AFRICA, *from page 1*

“One of the most important things I can provide is education to doctors in Ghana,” said Dr. Paonessa. “If I teach a doctor to perform surgery, it affects and helps the whole country in improving access to orthopedic care.”

Often, patients would have to travel to Europe or the United States for surgery. The goal of the organization is to establish orthopedic and spine care in these communities with adequately equipped medical facilities.

Dr. Paonessa will be accompanied on this journey by Backus surgical technician Charles Amanfo. Hailing from Kumasi, Ghana, the same city as FOCOS founder Dr. Boachie-Adje, Mr. Amanfo arrived in the United States five years ago, and is the main surgical tech for spinal surgeries at Backus. He is very excited to be going back to his homeland where his wife is working toward obtaining her green card so she can join him here.

“Charles is a valuable asset to the team as he understands the dialects and customs of Ghana,” Dr. Paonessa said. “People there suffer from diseases not usually seen in the U.S. such as tuberculosis which left untreated can cause deformities in children. Charles understands the challenges these patients face in getting healthcare.”

With doctors from around the world participating in this effort, it’s not only the patients who get something out of the endeavor. Dr. Paonessa recognizes the opportunity to gain new techniques and perspectives in orthopedic care.

“When I return home, I feel like a better doctor,” Dr. Paonessa said. “I view this journey as a mini-fellowship that invigorates me with a fresh perspective for my own practice at home.”



Dr. Paonessa evaluating a young patient for spinal surgery during a trip last year.



Dr. Paonessa in surgery at Backus.



Charles Amanfo, right, assists Dr. Cambridge during spinal surgery at Backus.

*B*ecause small steps lead to big results.

Curves of Plainfield
Wednesday, May 26
6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
782 Norwich Road,
Plainfield

Backus Hospital is offering “**da Vinci Women’s Health: Small Steps, Healthier Lives.**”

A prevention and wellness campaign with doctor-led events discussing the importance of diet, exercise, and annual gynecologic exams.

You can also learn about Backus Hospital’s **da Vinci surgical robot** and robotic hysterectomies and other procedures.

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