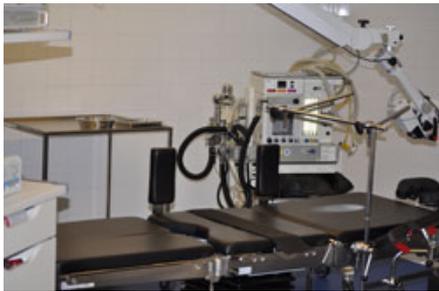


National Referral ENT Clinic: A Step Forward

Written by Samrawit Efrem

Friday, 12 November 2010 09:10 - Last Updated Friday, 12 November 2010 13:32



More than 75,000 patients in Eritrea have been treated in the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) clinic in the Halibet Hospital over the past 19 years alone with a few doctors and handful staff members. Patients were relieved from chronic infection, deafness, disorientation, body imbalance, as well as communication problems, thanks to the Government's vigorous endeavors. Impressed with these achievements, members of the German medical organization, MedCare, started campaigning to secure funds for the construction of a modern ENT clinic. As a result of joint efforts on the part of the Health Ministry and MedCare, a National Referral ENT clinic within the Orotta Hospital was constructed at the cost of over 13 million Nakfa that was inaugurated on November 9, 2010. Shabait conducted a brief interview with Dr. Habteab Mehari, the director of National Referral Hospitals in the Health Ministry, Prof. Eberhard Stennert, Board Chairperson of MedCare and Dr. Simon Haile, head of ENT Department at national level.



Dr. Habteab, can you tell us about the general structure of the ENT hospital?

The clinic comprises of a fully equipped modern operation theater, four well equipped rooms for conventional or routine examination purposes, and a specialized room for diagnostic investigations such as tympanometry, oto acoustic emission, audiometry and for detecting brain stem evoked potential, one of the latest procedures yet to be introduced in this field of oto-rhino-laryngology in Eritrea. It also has a reception room and additional rooms for doctors and staff members and others.

Prof. Stennert, tell us how you become interested in Eritrean ENT?

While I was working in the ENT clinic of the University of Gottingen, Germany, I came to know about Eritrea and the war for liberation. At that time, I heard personal report from the patients I

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had operated and became aware of a war which was hidden from the rest of the world. Later on, I met one of the two ENT specialists, Dr. Alem Tecklu, at a course held in the University of Geneva in 2000, and we shared our experiences. Then, I decided to visit Eritrea in 2004 and see possibilities how I might extend help.

Can you share with us about your experience in Eritrea?

Prof. Stennert: I am so grateful for the Government's support in my first visit. I held talks with the authorities on ways of expanding an ENT clinic, and we reached an agreement to construct a new clinic. Now, I am glad to witness the finishing of this national referral clinic. From my experience, this clinic ranks among the top similar clinics in the African continent in terms of its capacity and quality.



Dr. Simon, what problems were you encountering previously?

The previous clinic in Halibet Hospital is very small with inadequate equipments. Around 60 to 70 patients were treated with a few doctors per day. It is not hard to imagine the work load there. But, now all the necessary latest equipments are made available and this would make significant contribution in rendering efficient services.

What about the availability of trained professionals?



Dr. Simon: We have been working on this field for long time, we took different training courses abroad so that we don't have a problem in using the latest equipments. However, we need to

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upgrade new members and our main task for the future would be training new health professionals. In this way, I am confident that this hospital would be further expanded and developed.

Prof. Stennert: Doctor teams from Germany would come to extend assistance to physicians here and share their experiences. They are also ready to help in training ENT doctors.

What would be the next step to further develop the clinic?

Prof. Stennert: The outpatient department is completed and now we need an additional building for operation room with more technical equipments and wards including teaching rooms. I am very grateful for the Government's assistances and I am confident that the existing collaboration would be further strengthened for implementing the remaining task.

Dr. Habteab: There is a plan to add two other extension buildings whereupon the ENT ward will have 25 to 30 beds, a big operation theater, a library which can serve both as a teaching class and a conference room. Besides, a laboratory where our future ENT specialists will get their training would be constructed. Such kind of a modernized service in the premises of Orotta with the Medical School and Dentistry School will enable the National Referral Hospital to be a center for high quality medical service.