

**THE OBSTETRICAL FISTULA SURGICAL MISSION AND TRAINING PROGRAM**  
**REPORT**  
**AT THE HOSPITAL OF SAINT-JEAN DE DIEU**  
**IN TANGUIETA, NORTH BENIN**  
**APRIL 15 2018**

**International Team** **Doctor C.-H. Rochat**, Urologist, Switzerland  
Trainer and director of the obstetric fistula program of the Geneva  
Foundation for Medical Training and Research  
<https://www.gfmer.ch/>  
**Doctor F. Giaume**, Anesthesiologist, France  
**Ms Nadine Piatowski**, Operating Room Nurse, Switzerland  
**Doctor Shirly Solouki**, First year fellow in Urogynecology at Albert Einstein  
College of Medicine New York, USA  
**Doctor Whitney Clearwater**, Third year resident in Obstetrics and  
Gynecology at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine New York, USA

**Local team of Doctors**

Trainers **Doctor Yunga Foma Jean de Dieu**  
**Doctor Guiro Moussa**

Physicians in charge of Local Maternity Department

**Doctors Kponalegni S. Emmanuelle B.**

Third and Fourth year residents in Obstetrics and Gynecology and Practicing Physicians

**Doctor Sanon Adama**  
**Doctor Muhindo Shabani Finney**  
**Doctor Ouedraogo Jean**  
**Doctor Dagbozoukou S. Boris B.G.**  
**Doctor Aholou M.A. Renaud,**  
**Doctor Barhuze Lawambwa Frederic**  
**Doctor Congo Jean-Claude**  
**Doctor Kuete Tatepon Jean**  
**Doctor Adounvo Lédémè Inès Tatiana**  
**Doctor Akio Tollo Adouni S. Ida**  
**Doctor Tiendrebeogo Azize**  
**Doctor Thiombiano Madina Maano Youmani**

After a significant delay of our Air France flight we arrived in Cotonou on Monday evening Easter, April 2<sup>nd</sup>. We slept two hours at the Denominational Reception Center in Cotonou and got on the road to Tanguiéta at 5am. We used two vehicles, one of which the Claudine Talon Foundation provided. The trip took 9 and half hours. Upon our arrival Dr. Renaud Aholou presented the schedule that awaited us.

The **Sentinelles** NGO, which cares for patients from Burkina, referred 10 patients suffering from vesico-vaginal fistula and 4 with urogenital prolapse.

The **ESSOR** NGO, which recruits North Benin patients, referred 26 cases of vesico-vaginal fistula, 11 prolapse and 3 stress urinary incontinence.



***Hospitalized Patients***

**ESSOR** NGO partnered with 3 NGOs in the south of the country, referred 24 cases of vesico-vaginal fistula, 3 prolapse and 1 stress urinary incontinence.

In addition there were a number of male urology cases that Brother Florent selected. This mission promised to be complicated because of the large number of patients including 60 cases of vesico-vaginal fistula.



***Doctor C.-H. Rochat and Brother Florent***



***Tanguieta Hospital***

On the evening of April 3<sup>rd</sup>, Dr. Moussa Guiro, a recurring fistula surgery trainer at Tanguiéta, arrived from Ouagadougou.

Ten 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year OB/GYN trainees from Cotonou arrived with Professor René Xavier Perrin. These trainees are mainly from Benin, but also from Burkina and one from Congo. They all participated in university training in vaginal surgery and fistula. In addition, two practicing physicians from the area also joined the mission.

On Wednesday April 4<sup>th</sup>, the operating schedule began with 2 tables in the main operating room.

On the evening of the 4th, we were joined by Dr. Jean de Dieu Yunga Foma, who completed the team of teachers. He is a fistula expert from [WAHA](#) (Women and Health Alliance International). The GFMER Foundation opened a partnership in 2017 with WAHA to cover the expenses of Dr. Yunga Foma's mission during his time at the Tanguiéta hospital.



***Fistula Mission Team, April 2018***

Thursday through Saturday, consisted of full days of operating with operations in 2 rooms and 3 tables. The availability of tables is sometimes interrupted by hospital emergencies. For example, there were many cases of typhic peritonitis, with open laparotomy incisions requiring abdominal washing every 3 days in the operating room until the intestinal sutures heal and the abdomen can be closed.



*Intense surgical activity*



*Dr Yunga Foma operating on a fistula case*

Saturday the 7th marked a milestone for the hospital. The CT scanner became operational and the first patients benefited from it. This new scanner was purchased thanks to private donors from Geneva and Italy, the Episcopal Conference of Churches in Rome and the [Foundation GFMER](#).



*CT scanner at the Hospital of Tanguieta*

[Scanner Tanguieta](#)

Saturday evening there was a lecture with all the trainees where we reviewed our first week of operations. Participants seemed satisfied because the schedule created by Dr. Renaud Aholou and Dr. Emmanuelle Kponalegni ensured that everyone obtain surgical exposure according to their level of competence and learning objectives.



**Training symposia led by Doctors Guiro and Yunga**

On Sunday the 8<sup>th</sup>, I traveled with the international team to visit the Penjari Park while our African colleagues traveled to the Tanougou waterfall. We reunited in the evening to visit patients and s and plan the urology schedule.

[Promenez-vous dans les salles d’hospitalisation avec le Dr Rochat](#)

HÔPITAL SAINT JEAN DE DIEU  
B.P. 17 - TAMBOURTOUR - ABIDJAN  
SERVICI DE UROLOGIE GÉNÉRALISTE

MISSION FISTULE OBSTÉTRICALE DIRIGÉE PAR Charles- Henry ROCHAT  
Programme opératoire du 04 Avril 2018

Diagnostic préopératoire	Cure antérieure	Opérateur	Al
Double Fistule récidivée des angles	-Nov. 2016: Large FVV avec transection: cure voie basse + marsus -Avril 2017: triple fistule résiduelle; cure voie basse		
Double Fistule récidivée trigonale et angulaire droite	-2008: Fistule urétro- cervicale avec transection complète de l'urètre: cure voie basse - 2009: Fistule récidivée trigonale à droite à côté de l'urètre		
Large FVV trigonale de 7 cm	0		
Fistule urétro- cervicale 2 cm (col vésical)	0		
FVV rétro trigonale 1 cm récidivée	-2012: Cure FVV au CHU- MFL		
FVV rétro trigonale 4- 5 cm	0		
FVV 3 cm avec transection et destruction urétrale			
Large FVV rétro trigonale de 6 cm			



**An example of Operating Schedule**

**Daily post operative visits**

Monday the 9<sup>th</sup> through Wednesday the 11<sup>th</sup>, the fistula program continued under the supervision of Drs. Guiro and Yunga Foma. I performed general urology surgeries in a second room. These cases included four complicated male urethra transections due to pelvic fractures following traumatic accidents, a large staghorn calculus inside a kidney, a female urethral diverticulum, a fourth degree perineal tear after vaginal delivery with transection of the anal sphincter, as well as a congenital malformation where the ureter drains into the vagina.

On Tuesday, we met the **Claudine Talon Foundation**, who arrived for the official inauguration of the rehabilitation center for recovering fistula patients. In 2017, we created a partnership with the **Claudine Talon Foundation** to strengthen the comprehensive care for obstetric fistula patients in Tanguieta. The **Claudine Talon Foundation** is involved in training health workers to identify fistula cases but mainly focuses on the social and economic reintegration of fistula patients following their surgery.

Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup>, we began the surgeries very early in the morning in order to be available at 10am for the inauguration of the training center. The training center is located next to the women's shelter that the **GFMER Foundation** funded in 2006. The **Claudine Talon Foundation Center** is a technical school where patients can learn Income Generating Activities. Understandably women who have fistulas have suffered from disastrous deliveries due to lack of access to safe cesarean sections. They feel ashamed and rejected and are shunned by society. They do not have the luxury of being trained and integrated as productive member of society.

The first lady, Mrs. Claudine Talon, local authorities, representatives of **UNFPA**, NGO partners, Hospital Saint Jean de Dieu representatives and doctors, as well as former patients were present at the inauguration. Moving speeches were given and a ribbon cutting ceremony took place. Following the ceremony, the delegation went to the hospital to visit the maternity ward and all the patients operated on during this mission.



***Inauguration ceremony of the rehabilitation center***



***The First Lady Mrs Claudine Talon***

[Retrouvez les discours de la première Dame, du Frère Florent et de CH Rochat](#)



*Former patients at the Rehabilitation Center*



*The First Lady visits the Hospital*

Thursday afternoon we resumed the operating schedule until 8pm. We were then hosted by the Brothers for a farewell meal.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, Drs Yunga Foma and Guiro finished the entire operating schedule, which included 15 prolapse operations. The prolapse surgeries are funded by the **GFMER Foundation**. Prolapse occurs when the pelvic organs (uterus, bladder, rectum or intestines) protrude through the vagina. Obviously, this causes a great deal of embarrassment for the patients and also poses a risk of infection and renal failure (severe bladder prolapse can cause kinking of the ureters).

At the same time, the international team headed back to Cotonou and then New York, Nice and Geneva.

## April 2018 Mission Highlights

The fight against obstetric fistula has taken a great step forward through the involvement of the highest authorities in the country, [the First Lady Foundation](#). This strategy allows Benin to be a leader in the eradication of obstetric fistula.

The commitment of the local teams under the direction of Doctors Moussa Guiro and Yunga Foma contributes to the sustainability of this project.

The collaboration with Professor René Xavier Perrin's Gynecology department and the involvement of their residents is an excellent step in fostering widespread fistula surgeons.

This mission allowed me to expose all the participants to the [GFMER Foundation](#) free online course on obstetric fistula and our new chapter on Obstetric Fistula in the Encyclopedia Médico-Chirurgicale (published and put online in June 2018).

[Cours en ligne fistules obstétricales GFMER](#)

[Fistules vésicovaginales obstétricales et non obstétricales - 21/02/18](#)

The progress of this mission, the epidemiological and technical aspects as well as the results will be closely studied by Dr. Renaud Aholou, a GFMER Fellow, in his thesis specializing in gynecology.

The presence of two doctors from the [Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York](#) has been all the more appreciated as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of this partnership.



***Dr. Shirly Solouki and Dr. Whitney Clearwater  
Albert Einstein College of Medicine, NY***

## Financing the mission

From the financial point of view, the distribution is as follows:

The **GFMER Foundation** financed team transportation to the north, accommodation, hospital reimbursement for the cases (CHF 500.00 per case), surgical material (suture, probes, gloves, retractors, scissors), **ESSOR** (recruitment, travel and follow-up of patients in Benin), Burkina NGO (patient recruitment and follow-up), support for AGR, purchase of a motorcycle in 2018, and finally financial support for local teams and specialized nursing staff. The Burkina NGO was founded by a former patient who underwent 10 operations in 10 years and for the last 6 years has been tirelessly recruiting patients from Burkina.

**Sentinelles** took charge of the recruitment and follow-up of patients in Burkina Faso.

The **Claudine Talon Foundation** supported the recruitment of patients from the South and the reintegration training center.

The NGO **WAHA** the care of Dr. Yunga Foma.

## Special Thanks

**Thank you to the GFMER Foundation and all the donors associated with the obstetric fistula program who made this mission possible:**

The SDC Cotonou Office

The City of Geneva

The towns of Chênes-Bougeries, Chêne-Bourg and Thônex

The Ambre, Rumsey and Cartier Foundations, Alfred and Eugénie Baur, Firmenich Family Philanthropic Foundation, the Pictet & Cie Bank Charitable Foundation and the Global Foundation for Life Sciences.

As well as our faithful private donors.

We would also like to thank Medtronic for its support for the suture material, as well as Numelec and Rey Medical. A big thank you to the Hospital Brothers of Saint-Jean de Dieu for the provision of the hospital and for their faithful friendship!

## 2018 Objectives

Tanguiéta:

- Surgical fistula missions in July and November
- Buying a vehicle for the hospital
- Training Awards for 6 Specialist Physicians
- Strengthening financial support to the NGO ESSOR (new convention established).

Obstetrical fistula program of the GFMER Foundation:

- Surgical fistula missions in Guinea Conakry, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Congo Brazzaville and Chad. A 3-year partnership has been signed with CIESPAC (Center for Higher Education in Public Health in Central Africa) to develop a plan of care and teach in the field of fistula.