

Kenyan anaesthetist settles into scholarship in Sydney



Kenyan specialist Dr Wangari Nyaga is learning a lot during her one-year placement on an ANZCA International Scholarship.

Dr Wangari Nyaga is a Kenyan anaesthetist working at the Children's Hospital at Westmead in Sydney, NSW, on a one-year international scholarship awarded by ANZCA. Her work in Australia is focusing on paediatric pain management and anaesthesia and supervised by Dr Michael Cooper, the chair of the ANZCA Overseas Aid Committee.

First awarded in 2004, the scholarship was not awarded in 2011 or 2012 due to challenges in finding a candidate who could meet all relevant criteria and satisfy the medical board requirements. A 2014 recipient has already been selected; Dr Timothy Murithi Mwitii, a Kenyan anaesthetist who will work at the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital in Perth under the supervision of Associate Professor Roger Goucke, chair of the Essential Pain Management Sub-Committee. He will focus on pain management.

One of the major obstacles in finding a suitable candidate has been the need to satisfy the language requirements of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency for short-term training. The College supports these requirements as being important to patient safety, although they do pose an obstacle for people coming to Australia and New Zealand for short-term training.

Dr Nyaga, who arrived on August 23 and will be in Australia for one year, spoke to *the Bulletin* about her experiences and impressions so far:

How long were you a doctor in Kenya?
I have been a doctor in Kenya for 10 years.

What made you interested in visiting and working in Australia?
I heard that the pain program in Australia is very good (from a senior anaesthetist in Kenya). I was also told that Australians are very friendly. This was from people who had visited here. The combination of studying with leading authorities in the field and being in a conducive environment appealed to me.

The health and hospital systems would be very different between the two countries – what has struck you the most?

The amount of resources available in the public sector!

What could Australia learn from the Kenyan health system and vice versa?

This is a difficult one. I've only been here for a short while, and only in one hospital so don't know the health system in Australia very well. Also the fact that the priorities of the two health systems are probably different makes it difficult to say what one can learn from the other.

One thing that has struck me though is that staff can work part-time. In Kenya, I've not seen this implemented in the public sector, only in the private hospitals. It could be a way of reducing staff shortages if we allow people who are in the private sector to also work part-time in the public hospitals.

Where are you living while you're in Australia?

At the overseas doctor's quarters at the Children's Hospital, Westmead.

Has the scholarship program been a valuable experience so far?

Yes, very valuable. I'm learning a lot – such as how an effective pain service is set up, and what it takes to run it (a lot of effort and dedication!). Also the experience doing anaesthetics here has been enlightening.

ANZCA awards up to one international scholarship annually with the aim of developing leaders in anaesthesia and pain medicine in developing countries. The scholarship is open to a qualified specialist anaesthetist to pursue additional training in Australia or New Zealand and is designed to increase the recipient's capacity to advance anaesthesia and/or pain medicine for the benefit of their community.

The scholarship provides the recipient the ability to join the staff of a major hospital or rotation for up to one year. More information is available at www.anzca.edu.au/fellows/overseas-aid

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