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Dear Supporter,

Let me welcome you to the first of a series of regular newsletters keeping you informed about the work that Health The Gambia (HTG) has been doing and hopes to do in the future. In this issue:

Neonatal Project - update

A new water tank

Training for Matrons

Neonatal Project:

One of our earliest, and most ambitious, clinical projects, has been to develop a strategy to try and reduce the death rate among newborn babies (neonates) at RVTH. This currently runs at between 12% and 30%, which is high even for a country such as The Gambia. We have deliberately taken a slow approach, spending a whole year on data collection and needs assessment.

Although collecting data is difficult, we have enough to tell us what the major causes of death are, and how we might be able to intervene. Even more importantly, it has allowed the two Gambian nurses doing the work, Omar and Awa, a chance to really get involved on the labour ward and the neonatal unit. As a result, Omar has already started offering hands-on training in neonatal resuscitation to the midwives. In May, we stepped up a gear, and Omar and Awa are now spending most of their time either directly looking after the babies or leading training sessions for the midwives and nurses. Apart from this, HTG will also be supplying some basic equipment and supplies to improve care.

A new water tank

One of the problems that came to light as a result of the neonatal project was that the department had been without water for the last 3 months. This is clearly a priority if we want to reduce the incidence of infections, and so HTG quickly agreed to pay for the provision and installation of a new tank. The new tank has now been fitted at a cost of just under £1400, and will be maintained by RVTH staff.

Training for Matrons

Each department at RVTH is headed by a senior nurse, or Matron, and we are firm believers in the vital work that they do. Because medical and nursing staff frequently change, they represent a stable core of expertise at RVTH. The management team at RVTH are well aware of their importance, and so to both improve their performance and support their work, HTG has agreed to fund part-time management training courses for 8 or the 16 matrons, with an option to fund the rest if all goes well. So far, 4 of 8 the matrons have been on the 3 months course, and the others are due to start soon.

These three items are only a tiny bit of the work that HTG does at RVTH. Between them, they demonstrate the mix of clinical expertise and interest in unglamorous issues (such as water tanks) that makes us so unusual. Of course, all of this is only possible thanks to your support. If you want to see more information about HTG, please look at our website. If you would like to get in touch, please email us at [ContactHTG @ healthgambia.net](mailto:ContactHTG@healthgambia.net) or write to us at the address above, and thank you once again for your support.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Matt Williams
Director, Health The Gambia