



*SIGN Field Reports  
take you with us as  
we walk the world!*

## Cameroon: Baptist Hospital Mutengene

### Treating Complex Injuries

by Randy Huebner

It's 1:00am, and I've arrived at the airport in Mutengene, Cameroon, with Dr. Richard Gellman and Chris Varney. The same can't be said for some of our luggage, but we are happy to be visiting our friend Dr. Henry Ndasi. For many years we have met at the SIGN Conference and have exchanged emails, but this is my first chance to visit his hospital. Dr. Ndasi and his staff have done nearly 700 SIGN Surgeries over the last 8 years and regularly present their results at the SIGN Conference.

Dr. Ndasi is hosting a course with Dr. Gellman on limb deformity for about a dozen SIGN Surgeons from Cameroon and nearby Nigeria. This technique uses a set of metal rings that are attached with pins to a patient's leg. A computer program, along with fine adjustments to the rings over several weeks or months, allows a surgeon to correct bent, shortened, and infected limbs that would be hard to treat with immediate surgery. It is basically a three-dimensional geometry problem with lots of nuts and bolts. The surgeons joining us are all very experienced and most have used these methods in their hospitals

### Cameroon



- ★ Baptist Hospital Mutengene
- Other SIGN Programs in Cameroon

Immediately  
applying learning  
through hands-on  
simulation helps  
surgeons turn  
knowledge into  
surgical skill.





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already, so the goal is to have an advanced teaching course over four days.

That same morning, we arrive early at the hospital and meet our friends, including Dr. Oludwadare Esan from Nigeria. We tour the hospital and I am immediately impressed. There are lots of smiles from the staff, everything is very well cared for, and there is a feeling of pride that is hard to miss.

We start the conference with lectures, case discussions, and by the afternoon of the first day all of the surgeons have begun working with the rings on foam replica bones to correct a tibial deformity. For the rest of the week we continue with lectures, discussions, and practice, while adding surgeries for patients in need.

On the second day, Dr. Gellman, Dr. Ndasi, and Dr. Esan treated a young woman who had an old ankle fracture from a motorbike accident. The original surgeons were able to save her foot, but



Dr. Gellman (right) led the course and supervised difficult surgeries for patients like Maurice.

her leg healed short and with a foot deformity—making it impossible for her to walk normally. The case went very well, but she will still need several months for her bone to heal in the correct position. These cases are very complicated and Dr. Gellman's experience, encouragement, and mild demeanor make him the perfect teacher.

Another patient was Maurice, a 41-year-old who works as a driver. While he was a passenger on a motorcycle, he was hit by a car and broke his tibia. He had two surgeries over the last nine months, and his leg was still infected and refused to heal. He had not been able to work during this time and his family was helping to care for him. The surgery went well and hopefully he will be back to work supporting his family soon.

These trips are a great time to connect with SIGN Surgeons. In the evenings, we enjoyed friendly discussions about past and future cases, the World Cup, and SIGN. I continue to be impressed by the knowledge, empathy, and dedication of the SIGN Surgeons I have met. SIGN has become a worldwide network for friendship and training that helps hundreds of thousands of the neediest patients around the world.



Randy Huebner (left) is the founder of Acumed, the first corporate sponsor of **SIGN**. He has travelled to several **SIGN** Programs with Dr. Gellman and Dr. Zirkle.