



MaterCare International

"maternal health care is a human right"

Fall 2006

MCI Newsletter

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Upcoming Events:

Zagreb Workshop
May 9-11, 2007

Warsaw Workshop
October 2007

Volunteer Speaker Training Session (Canada)
April 2007- no dates yet.

2nd Annual Gala
Ontario. May 25th, 2007

Recommended Articles:

Lancet.com
"Obstetric vesicovaginal fistula as an international public-health problem".
Sept 30 2006

Timesonline.co.uk
"Risks of Abortion"
October 27, 2006

LifeSiteNews.com
"Marriage Debate: Catholic MP Reminds Members Tenure as MPs Short – Eternity Long"
Ottawa, December 7, 2006

LifeSite News.com
"Nurse's Refusal to Assist in Abortion Leads to Hospital Policy Protecting Conscience Rights"
December 19, 2006

Visit our website

www.matercare.org

"Ghana Projects Completed. Ghana Done Well."



MaterCare International (MCI) is pleased to announce the completion of its maternal health projects in Ghana, west Africa. MCI, was invited to Ghana, by the late Bishop James Owusu, Bishop of Sunyani and Chair of the health care commission for the Ghanaian Conference of Bishops, in 1995 to help with and development of programmes to reduce the tragically high levels of maternal mortality and morbidity and to treat mothers suffering from obstetric fistula.

In 1997 MCI developed a model of rural essential maternity care around a mission hospital in the diocese of Sunyani. The model included prevention programmes funded by the Canadian International Development Agency and MaterCare International. The model included the training of village traditional birth attendants in safe clean delivery as well as recognition and referral of high risk mothers to hospital using a pictorial antenatal card; the training of nurse/midwives in 11 maternity centres to use the labour partograph as a visual aid in monitoring the labour progress; an emergency obstetric transport system with blood transfusion capability to safely transport mothers with complications to district hospitals, all linked by radio. A research programme was completed which evaluated a new oral, effective and inexpensive method of managing life threatening postpartum haemorrhage. Peer reviewed and published in leading journals and at medical meetings, this project resulted in an increased number of mothers referred to the hospital and thus has

reduced the number of deaths and birth injury. It has also proved to be sustainable and easily transportable to any rural area of poverty and poor communications.

At the same time, the curative care fistula hospital project was being developed in the Archdiocese of Cape Coast. The Fistula Hospital was built to provide corrective surgery and treatment to women with obstetric fistula. It will also act as a training centre for local doctors and nurses in the surgery and nursing management of fistula patients. MCI has contributed over US\$450,000 to its construction and equipping with donations from the Italian Bishops Conference, Ireland Aid, the UK, the States of Guernsey, foundations, women's groups, parishes and individual donors. Recently, the Fistula Hospital was turned over to the Archdiocese of Cape Coast and the Board of Trustees. *"The Archdiocese of Cape Coast chooses to accept full responsibility for the fistula hospital, for its establishment, its operation and meeting whatever commitments have been given to donors as a condition to the receipt of funds."* The Board of Trustees will establish a date for the grand opening of the hospital in the near future.

Now an accredited non-government organisation with the United Nations, MCI has matured and learned with these projects, becoming internationally recognised through various awards for excellence. MCI is currently developing similar projects in Rwanda and Kenya.

R.L.Walley

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MaterCare International's New Chairperson

MCI wishes to introduce Dr. Adrian Thomas as its new Chairperson. Dr. Thomas takes over from Dr. Eamon O'Dwyer who stepped down after a 4-year tenure. He is a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at the Mercy Hospital in Melbourne, Australia. Dr. Thomas has been involved with MCI for

the last 10 years, providing leadership, support, and advice.

Dr. Thomas traveled twice with Dr. Robert Walley to conduct Needs Assessment for maternity health care in East Timor.

He is also a co-founder of MaterCare Australia.



Dr. Adrian Thomas

MaterCare Poland

MC Poland is now a registered as a non-government organization with charitable status as a result of a lecture by MCI's Executive Director, Dr. Robert Walley, in 2005. MC Poland recently received a grant from the Ministry of Health to promote fertility awareness in Poland.

MC Poland has focused itself on the development of a network of physicians as well as the issue of fertility awareness promotion and sound infertility treatment. MC Poland's founder and chair, Prof. Bogdan Chazan, has been appointed by the

Minister of Health to chair the National Committee for Fertility Awareness Promotion; in this he supported by MC Poland to ensure that thoughtful projects for fertility care promotion are implemented - in partnership between the Ministry and MaterCare if the need arises. In addition, MC Poland has organized three weekend workshops for infertile couples in Niepokalanow, the City of the Immaculate founded by St Maximilian Kolbe. These workshops offer an interdisciplinary approach and a depth of individual focus impossible to achieve in the limited time

available in single medical consultations. The feedback from the married couples has been gratitude as they finally feel that the Church is interested in helping them since infertility presents difficulties on many levels - spiritual, psychological and medical. The MC Poland approach is unique in bringing all these facets together and thus saving the couples from endless trips from specialist to specialist. Fertility awareness, understanding, and charting a woman's cycle as a first step in diagnosis or treatment are also crucial components. In beginning to confront this issue, it is becoming clearer that

(cont'd on page 4)

Question and Answers with Dr. Krotoski (MaterCare USA)



Dr. W. "Al". Krotoski

Wojciech "Al". Krotoski, MD., Ph.D., M.P.H.

Dr. Krotoski is a MaterCare USA board member residing in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in the United States of America. He is a retired Physician and Medical Researcher specializing in Tropical and Preventive Medicine. Dr. Krotoski is also co-founder of *The Hippocratic Resource*, an organization of pro-life health professionals in Louisiana, and remains active as a speaker and medical expert in Respect for Life Issues before the State legislature.

Q. How do you benefit in the practise of your profession by the information you have learned at the conferences?

The information provided and the discussions exchanged both renew my convictions regarding the fundamental truths of Catholic morality and strengthen my ability to discuss them. This enhances my effectiveness as a medical respect-for-life spokesman in the Baton Rouge area (state capital) and in Louisiana as a whole, where I work with state legislators, medical professionals, respect-for-life groups, church representatives, university students, etc.

Q. Would you recommend MCI Workshops to your colleagues? Why? Why not?

Unequivocally yes (and I do!). The "culture of death" is alive and well (!) in the U.S., and it can sometimes be difficult for medical professionals of integrity to maintain their

moral/ethical footing in such an environment. This is particularly true, given the agenda-driven, liberal media, with their frequent inability to distinguish right from wrong, as well as the often seductive nature of modern technologies, which allow a great deal to be done to human beings, although not always for them. The ruling "ethic" sometimes comes down to "if it can be done, do it," without any careful examination of the basic individual, societal and overall human consequences.

Q. Why did you join MaterCare and what does it mean to you?

Basically, a continuation of the above, but, additionally, the sense of doing something truly worthwhile (even if a bit vicariously?) to help correct obstetrical (birth-related) problems arising in the context of the sacrificial nature of brave women who embrace motherhood.

Q. Why were you drawn to participate in the MCI workshops originally?

Anticipated high-level, timely and up-to-date, medical/obstetrical presentations and information exchanges regarding respect-for-life issues from a professional and orthodox perspective.

Q. How many workshops have you attended in Rome? Four

Q. What is the importance or relevance of the workshops now, after attending four?

Given the accelerating advances in reproductive technology - both moral and immoral - I find the relevance to be equal to that of the original one, if not increasing.

Donate your Air Miles to MaterCare (Canada only)

To date supporters have donated over 105 000 Air Miles which helps considerably to reduce travel costs.

MaterCare Air Miles Business Account number is: 8007 7296 378

Thanks to all supporters who have donated their AirMiles: truly, thanks to you, it is a success!

Eye Opening Experience- My first trip to Africa by Simon Walley



Fr. Barnabus and Simon at the Equator

When I was asked to visit three African countries where MCI has projects, I jumped at the opportunity. Having been with MCI over 6 years and grown up with a father who spent a lot of time in Africa, I had heard, learned and spoken about the state of maternal health in developing countries but had lacked the African experience. The purpose of the trip was to collect information, strengthen partnerships, meet government and church officials and conduct a needs assessment for MCI projects in Rwanda and Kenya as well as to visit the Fistula Hospital in Ghana.

The first African country visited was Kenya. On arrival, we drove north to the Diocese of Isiolo where MCI's maternal health and fistula project will be located. Bishop Luigi Locati had invited MCI in March 2005 to visit and develop a maternal health project for Isiolo. Sadly, the Bishop was murdered several months later. MCI continues to develop project with his replacement, Bishop Mukubo.

Isiolo is a dry, poor and neglected area of Kenya where literally there is nothing. In our terms, the people are very poor. There is very little in the way of healthcare, especially maternal healthcare. Maternal mortality and morbidity rates in this area are among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa. There is a desperate need for MCI's model rural essential/emergency obstetrical care for the region. We spent 8 days in Kenya collecting information, meeting with the Bishop and his staff as well as visiting the parishes of Isiolo. It was amazing to me how happy the people of Isiolo are in spite of their material poverty but I came away with the impression that they truly know what is important in life!

The next country we visited was Rwanda. The country is beautiful, clean, and you can see much development. It is hard to believe that genocide occurred here 12 years ago. The people are friendly. Rwanda is another country with high maternal mortality and morbidity rates. The high rate of gynaecological and obstetrical fistulae is the result of the sexual assaults and the lack of maternal care during the genocide. We met with several government and church officials to discuss MC's project. Dr. Charles Ntare, a young Rwandese doctor who has pursued MC when he saw the need for MCI's programs to help his country's poor mothers. Although there are currently international organizations (such as Engender Health) in Rwanda conducting 2-week fistula training courses for doctors, these courses are not sustainable and will not meet long-term needs. Our experience, as with the Fistula Hospital in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, is that a separate dedicated hospital capable of training local doctors is essential for a long-term solution for fistula patients. Presently, very few fistula patients are treated at local hospitals and are often pushed to the end of the line.

Ghana was the last country visited. Ghana is developing economically very rapidly among African countries. We were fortunate to visit the Fistula Hospital in Mankessim with His Eminence, Cardinal Peter Turkson. It was gratifying to see at last the beautiful buildings and equipment funded by MaterCare donors and sponsors. It is indeed a project of which MCI can be very proud.

Truly, this was the trip of a lifetime!



Fr. Barnabus and Simon visit an Isiolo school



Memorial Site to Bishop Locati



Isiolo Village



Fr. Barnabus with parishioner



Isiolo Children



Kigali, Rwanda 2006



Rwandese students



Meeting with Cardinal Turkson and staff 2006



Cardinal Turkson tours the Fistula Hospital

MaterCare International

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Dr. Robert Walley

Editor, Public Engagement Director

Simon Walley

Executive Assistant

Wanda White

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MaterCare International is "Catholic Action"

In 2004, the late Holy Father Pope John- Paul II in his address to an international meeting of the Catholic Action movement in Italy called for a re-launching of the movement with the "humble and courageous decision to begin afresh from Christ".

The Holy Father noted that the Catholic Action movement "has been a force of growth, structure, and stimulation of that contemporary current of promotion of the laity that found solemn confirmation in Vatican Council II". "In it generations of faithful matured their own vocations in the course of Christian formation which has led them to the full awareness of their own co-responsibility in building the Church, stimulating apostolic impulse in all realms of life." The Holy Father emphasized, "Today I must repeat once again: the Church needs Catholic Action!"

The Holy Father observed, "Catholic Action has always been, and must still be today a place of formation for the faithful who, enlightened by the social doctrine of the Church, are committed in the front line in the defense of the sacred gift of life, in safeguarding the dignity of the human person, in implementing educational freedom,

in the promotion of the real meaning of marriage and the family, in the exercise of charity towards the neediest, in the quest for peace and justice in the application of the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity in different social situations that interact among themselves."

John-Paul II told the meeting that Catholic Action is "a precious gift that the Holy Spirit has given the Church, an inheritance that is called to inspire new fruits of holiness and apostolate at the dawn of the third millennium," extending the association "to many other local Churches of different countries". "The time has arrived for a re-launching to which your many endeavors give testimony, because there are many signs" that make one confident in the 'kairos' (a Greek term meaning opportune moment) of a new spring of the Gospel."

Catholic Action, the Holy Father concluded, is a "great task" which can involve "all the lay faithful who are aware of their own baptismal vocation and the three commitments - priestly, prophetic and royal - which springs from it,"

MCI is professional Catholic Action.

R. L. Walley, Adapted from Zenit.org 2004-09-03

MaterCare Poland- cont'd



Maria Srodon, and Prof. Bogdan Chazan with MaterCare Australia's Dr. Elvis Seman (Rome workshop 2006)

the aim must be to establish an infertility clinic of MaterCare standards. Experience has demonstrated the poor care received by infertile couples in a system, which sees nothing wrong in producing babies on dishes. The weekends are a first step towards such a goal and are very helpful in gathering support and expertise.

In August 2006, Members of the Board of MC Poland signed a petition to add the words 'from conception to natural death to the Polish Constitution where it guarantees respect for life. Much heated media discussion issue has resulted.

Maria Srodon

MaterCare International (MCI) is an international organization of Catholic health professionals dedicated to the care of mothers and babies, both born and unborn, through new initiatives of service, training, research, which are designed to reduce the tragically high rates of maternal mortality, morbidity, and abortion.

Our mission is to serve the Culture of Life where it is most at risk- those crisis areas and 'hotspots' where mothers and their children -born and unborn- are neglected or abandoned outright.

MaterCare International

8 Riverview Avenue, St. John's, NL Canada A1C 2S5

Telephone: (709) 579-6472 Fax: (709) 579-6501

Email: info@matercare.org Website: www.matercare.org

- registered in Canada, Ireland, the United States, the United Kingdom, Poland, and Australia.
- is the obstetrical arm of the World Federation of Catholic Medical Associations (FIAMC).
- is an NGO of the Department of Public Information of the United Nations (UN) with special consultative status (ECOSOC).