

Dear Family & Friends,

Thursday, February 18, 2010

One of our neediest patients in the hospital tonight is Harouna. He was in a high speed motor vehicle accident on January 10th. He came to Galmi with a broken right leg and a crushed left leg. The left leg was in so many pieces that nobody at any of the best hospitals in the world would have been able to offer him anything but amputation. He has been lying in bed for the last month in pulley traction to try to heal the femur fracture in his only remaining leg. Today, Dr. Sanoussi and I decided he needed more than pulley traction. Pulley traction works in some cases but sometimes the bones never fuse. If they do fuse, it's after several months of lying in bed which results in muscle atrophy and bed sores and depression from being away from home.

We've been blessed over the past few years to have visiting orthopedic surgeons for about 2 months out of every year. (We need others like them!) Dr. Johnstone and Dr. Ulmer have taught Christopher the SIGN technique of placing intramedullary rods in long bone fractures without the need for the intraoperative x-rays that are used back home to confirm the position of the hardware during the surgery.

The surgery seems to have been successful. The rod and screws went in nicely after several hours of work. The Galmi OR has some fantastic Nigerien surgical assistants and anesthetists that make the work easier and more fun. Tomorrow we will be able to encourage Harouna to try to get out of bed using a walker and to help him get his strength back. In the pipeline, we are thankful to be looking forward to the arrival of Deb, an occupational therapist. Too bad she's not here this week as Harouna and several others need her expertise. Pray with us that Harouna's leg will heal strongly and without infection and his soul, too, would be healed during his convalescence here at Galmi.

After finishing Harouna's surgery, the midwife wheeled in Fatsima, a woman referred from the government hospital in Konni for severe bleeding while in labor. We found her to have placenta previa, where the placenta threatens to be born before the baby. It is such a blessing to have a blood bank here with a safe supply of fresh blood for such life-threatening emergencies. We immediately began transfusing Fatsima and delivered her healthy baby girl by cesarean section. Both mom and baby are doing very well.

During the surgery, one of the OR techs came in tell us that there were reports of noteworthy activity in the capital of Niamey. We have learned that the President has been made to step down by those who have insisted on the 10 year limit of presidential service specified in the previous constitution. The confrontation was short-lived and all is now calm in Niamey and in the rest of the country, although one could say that the embers are still smoldering. We expect there will be a change of leadership and hope that peace will prevail. The New York Times today summarized the events:

http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2010/02/18/world/international-us-niger-coup.html?_r=1&ref=world



Christopher & Nancy

Elisheva and Zeb are fine there in the capital at Sahel Academy. When the gunshots were heard, the school went into a very organized lock-down until it was determined to be safe to re-open the gates. The school will be closed tomorrow in case there are further repercussions from today's events.

Nancy is making great progress in her Hausa language learning and makes people smile when they hear new phrases from her at both appropriate and inappropriate moments. She makes wonders in the kitchen using the limited foods we have available here, including the homemade garlic bread we had for dinner tonight with the spaghetti and meat sauce. She'll be transitioning into the work in the pharmacy in these months ahead.

Gratefully serving with you,

Contact info:
Hôpital de Galmi
B.P. 44
Madaoua, NIGER
christopher.zoolkoski@sim.org
nancy.zoolkoski@gmail.com