

# HAWASSA CHRONICLES

EDITION 03 | 13 APRIL 2010

At a certain moment in time during the winter of 2009 my boss Detlef suggested that we – Jaap, Pien and myself – should join him on a journey to Ethiopia and work for a short period of time at the university hospital in Hawassa. Without much thought, and with mucho gusto, we consented in advance of actual planning of this adventure. Detlef had visited Ethiopia, and the hospital in particular, on previous occasions and would do so again come spring... accompanied by us!

Our little big adventure would be a mix of business and pleasure. As pleasure is defined in the spur of the moment, business would need some serious consideration. Whereas our supervisors – Detlef and Hennie, an urologist with tropical experience – would stay for one week, we would stay for six or more weeks in order to teach our colleagues and learn from them in return. Specific goals were formulated; exempli gratia gathering information on patient demographics, teach inguinal hernia repair with a mesh, teach the basics of laparoscopy, gather insight on what work was done by our local colleagues on a weekly basis and what work could not be done due to absence of material or knowledge.



Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> of April marked our first visit to the university hospital. The hospital is a third line referral hospital serving a region with a population of twelve million people. The surgery department has three surgeons, five residents and thirteen interns and a small army of students. A typical day starts with the morning report sometime between 08:15 and 08:30 followed by either a round along several surgical wards, attendance at the emergency room or operations on three out of five days. At twelve o'clock a two hour midday break starts and work would resume from two till five in the afternoon. By Jove! I hope I'll not get too comfortable with these working hours, although it's a welcome rhythm in temperatures above thirty degrees Celsius!

Our first day however, after the aforementioned morning report, ensued with a meeting with some sub top level bosses of the university; the former head of surgery dr. Abera, the head of medical college and the head of logistics and finance. Afterwards we learned these figures were mere pawns, and a meeting between our elders and the head of the university would take place sometime later that week.

During this first meeting I could not help but compare our sit down to a pack of dogs sniffing each other out at their first encounter. Rudimentary plans were made to consolidate our visit as a pilot so that during the years to come more young doctors would be welcome to visit this particular hospital in Hawassa for the betterment of us all! *\*and the crowd goes wild\**

After an introductory tour around the hospital Pien, Jaap and myself ranged into Hawassa in search for an acceptable roof over our heads. This proved to be a small adventure on itself; to be continued later on!

