

### **ELECTIVE IN KENYA 2006.**

This talk was given by two final year medical students from UWCM, Sebastian Johns and Anthony Langham. They were the recipients of bursary awards from Cardiff Medical Society and during the Summer of 2006 had spent their elective period in Kenya working with patients suffering from HIV infection. They had been based at St Joseph's Mission Hospital in a rural town (Migari) within Nyanza Province in Kenya. This province has the highest prevalence of HIV in Kenya's rather conservatively estimated at 14.9% but in reality thought to be nearer 20%. They described the scale of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa with 24.7 million people living with HIV and 2.8 million newly infected with HIV during 2006.

The students participated in ward work, HIV clinics and assisted in surgery. Over 75% of the inpatients at the hospital were HIV positive, but many were not told that they were HIV positive (and those who were told were not educated regarding their illness). Horrified at the lack of education the students decided to undertake some community research and questioned people informally on the streets and in bars. It was surprising that 75% of the people questioned could not identify unprotected sexual intercourse as a major route of transmission. Many misconceptions were identified. It was a widespread belief that HIV was a curse sent by God or the Devil and also that having sexual intercourse with a virgin would cure HIV. The students had the opportunity to visit Sally Orphanage. There are 103 children at the orphanage and all are AIDS orphans. The orphanage relies solely on charitable donations, there is no government support or funding. Although these children have a 35% chance of having HIV they know very little about HIV and its implications.

Touched by the above, the students embarked on the work of educating people regarding HIV. They found an old building owned by the hospital that had been unused for 14 years and set it up as a classroom. They also organised a testing day attended by many counsellors from Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centres. Despite free testing being available through charities it is a taboo subject and many people are afraid to go for testing. Only approximately 20 tests per month were being carried out at the Mission hospital. During the above testing day 132 tests were carried out.

The students also set up an education toolkit for children and called it Pambazuka, which translates as 'New Dawn'. Children complete a quiz to get a baseline. Teachers then educate them regarding HIV and the quiz is repeated. As a result of their work 3000 children have been educated through Pambazuka. They are hoping to publish their work in the near future. Further information can be obtained from the website [www.pambazuka.ork.uk](http://www.pambazuka.ork.uk).

Following the hard work the students enjoyed some free time on safari, visiting Victoria Falls and visiting Table Mountain in Capetown.

Dr Wood thanked Sebastian and Andrew for an interesting talk and presented them with a cheque representing their Bursary Award. They have decided to send the money to Kenya to further their work in educating the population regarding AIDS - the money will be used to train a counsellor.