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Kendu Hospital

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Kendu Adventist Hospital

GEORGE O. OPUNDO

George O. Opundo is the chief executive officer of Kendu Adventist Hospital, Kendu Bay, Kenya.

Kendu Adventist Hospital is the oldest and largest Adventist medical facility in Kenya. It was founded in 1924 under the East African Union of Seventh-day Adventists and is today under the West Kenya Union Conference. It is situated a short distance from the shores of Lake Victoria at Kendu Bay.

Founding of the Institution

When Kendu Adventist Hospital (then Kenya Hospital) was founded in 1924,¹ Dr. George A. S. Madgwick was appointed to serve as the first medical director. The first two nurses at the hospital were Karen Nielsen and Carentze Olsen who, prior to coming to Kendu, served at Skodsborg Sanitarium in Denmark.² Dr. Madgwick served in Kendu for 15 years while the two pioneer nurses both served for 25 years. In the early years the hospital conducted important medical work, bringing much needed services to this region. Some 20 other medical directors served at Kendu following Dr. Madgwick, serving terms of varied durations. Two of them served more than one term; notably, Dr. B. E. Amundsen (1950-1953 and 1954-1956) and Dr. E. C. Kraft (1971-1979; 1985-1988; and 1989-1990).

Kendu Adventist Hospital has over the years grown to be a complex which encompasses a School of Medical Sciences, an elementary school, and a Comprehensive Care Center. The hospital which started with six beds is currently a 170-bed facility.

In 2007 the hospital's management structure was revised, creating the position of chief executive officer who leads an administrative team composed of the director of medical staff, director of nursing services, business manager, director of school of medical sciences, coordinator for the comprehensive care center, and hospital chaplain.

Medical Services

Kendu Adventist Hospital is proactively involved in offering the following services:

Preventive and Promotive Services

Childhood immunization services

Nutrition services

Ante natal care to pregnant mothers

Health education to clients

Follow-up home visits in the community

Contraceptive technology services

Regular medical check-up on request

Blood pressure monitoring services by community health volunteers

Curative

Diagnostic services – functional medical laboratory, X-ray

In- and out-patient services

Treatment of tropical and non-tropical diseases

Management of non-communicable diseases (NCD) and communicable diseases

General surgery

Wound management services

Yearly corrective specialized surgeries

Medical follow-up upon discharge

Out-patient medical and surgical clinics

Dental services

Patient support center (Comprehensive Care Center) for clients infected or affected by HIV and AIDS

Rehabilitative Services

Provision of support service to needy physically challenged clients

Household follow-ups after reconstructive surgery

Patient physical and occupational therapy services

Visits to schools with physically handicapped pupils

Important Leadership Tenures

While different generations each have their memories of the great services offered by the missionary doctors over the decades, Dr. E. C. Kraft is well remembered for returning to serve in Kendu more than once and particularly for the structural expansion of the hospital facility. Dr. Kraft's wife, Ruby, died in Kendu in 1989 while he was serving his third and last term. The elementary school, Ruby Kraft Primary School, was established in 1991 within the hospital complex in honor of his departed wife.³

Schools Associated with the Hospital

Kendu Adventist School of Medical Sciences (KASMS). The school, formerly known as Kendu Adventist School of Nursing, was established in 1948 to train nurse assistants and later trained nurses at certificate level until the year 2007 when the diploma program was established, giving room for both direct admission and qualified nurses seeking to upgrade to diploma level. The name was changed to Kendu Adventist School of Medical Sciences upon the introduction of a new diploma in clinical medicine and surgery in 2011. The college is registered by the Ministry of Education and upholds high academic and moral standards.

Ruby Kraft Primary School. This primary school established in 1991⁴ was initially intended to take care of the workers' children. However, due to the school's continued excellent performance in the Kenya National Examinations Council exams for the eighth grade, and the subsequent overwhelming number of applicants, the school has over the years grown to the current pupil population of more than 300 children. The school has classes for both an early child development program and primary grades 1 to 8.

The Hospital's Relationship with the Region

From its inception and as the years advanced, Kendu Adventist Hospital served as the only major referral in the large South Nyanza region of Kenya and opened doors to referrals from across the border into neighboring countries of Tanzania and Uganda. The hospital currently serves as a major referral facility for Homa Bay and the surrounding counties and is also an approved center for a one-year internship program for medical officers who are posted by the national government upon their completion of degree courses in various institutions both locally and internationally.

Services Provided to the Area in Which the Institution is Located

Christmas parties with selected educational themes

Marketplace

Church services open to all community members

Outreach clinics on ante natal care and immunization services

Comprehensive care center for those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS

Supply of treated water at a subsidized rate

Key Donations to and Partnership with the Hospital

The hospital has benefitted from the following organizations, institutions, and agencies:

ADRA Finland - sponsorship to clients in need of reconstructive surgeries

A Better World Canada - structural upgrade, rehabilitative care, and medical equipment

Adventist Health International - governance and networking

Kenya Government, Ministry of Health - regulatory, licensing, and supervisory

County Government of Homa Bay - Human resource and supervisory support

Christian Health Association of Kenya (CHAK) - advocacy, collective bargaining, facility enhancement

Friends of Kendu Adventist Hospital - development

Loma Linda University - Program expansion and exchange

University of East Africa Baraton - program exchange and affiliations

Diak University, Finland - program exchange and affiliations

West Kenya Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists - 13th Sabbath offering which constructed the 34-bed surgical ward

National Hospital Insurance Fund

Spiritual, Medical, Economic, and Social Impact of the Institution

The hospital's medical training school has produced more than 10,000 nurse graduates and more than 200 clinical medicine and surgery diploma graduates. The alumni are spread out globally with a general reputation of outstanding performance with a high level of competency. The institution makes available quality services to the community with the established referral and networking system exposing the clients to other available quality services as per their needs.

Due to the existence of the institution, the local community has over the decades been empowered economically with ever increasing demands for rental houses, off-campus student hostels, recreation areas, restaurants, and shops. The institution also engages the small entrepreneurs who supply vegetables and other perishable produce from the surrounding market by engaging the local vendors.

Socially the institution has enabled the community to mingle with people from other countries and counties. This exposes the local community to a broader perspective of life, increasing their knowledge, changing their attitudes where necessary, and improving their skills. Inter-marriages have also been encouraged and as a result the community is empowered to enlarge its worldview of issues.

Staying on Course to the Mission

The daily devotional programs conducted by the staff with the clients have continued to provide a better healing environment to the clients who seek services at the hospital. The hospital chaplaincy presence and regular visits to in-patient clients augments the medical services rendered at the facility. The clients admitted as inpatients are served with a healthy vegetarian diet which also compliments the medical services.

With the increased frequency of employment actions by health workers in the public hospitals, such as the prolonged doctors' strike which started at the end of 2017 and lasted more than three months⁵ and which happened just after a five-month strike⁶ by nurses, the Kendu Adventist Hospital managed to serve clients from far and near regardless of their economic or social backgrounds and despite the strains on the available resources.

The positive response to such crises is driven more by the hospital's value system that focuses on saving lives as opposed to mere money making. A large percentage of the increased number of patients who sought services at the hospital during the strikes were from poor economic backgrounds, with most being unable to settle their hospital bills.

Moving Forward

Although the hospital continues to serve as a major referral hospital in the region, emergence of many other small health facilities with more modern sophisticated equipment poses a challenge to the existence, competitiveness, and relative efficiency in service delivery at the Kendu Adventist Hospital. The hospital therefore needs to look critically into ways of sourcing relevant functional diagnostic equipment that responds effectively to the market trends.

The following specific actions may go a long way in reestablishing the hospital, not only as a center of excellence in service, but also as a facility of choice in and around the region:

Establishment of a functional and well-equipped emergency and trauma care center

Remodeling of out-patient department and renovation of in-patient wards

General infrastructural improvement to suit modern trends and needs

Acquisition of modern digital imaging equipment in the radiology department

Identification and establishment of satellite clinics in strategic urban centers

Continuous and purposed improvement in staff remuneration to increase retention of key technical staff

The institution has been known by three different names at different times as follows: Kenya SDA Hospital (1924-1929), Kendu Mission Hospital (1929-1980); Kendu Adventist Hospital (1980-present).

List of Leaders/Medical Directors Since Inception

Dr. G. A. S. Madgwick (1925-1940); Dr. Ermshar (1941-1942); Dr. L. P. Foster (1943-1944); Dr. D. H. Abbot (1945-1950); Dr. B. E. Amundsen (1950-1953); Dr. M. W. Fowler (1953-1954); Dr. B. E. Amundsen (1954-1956); Dr. S. A. Kotz (1956-1960); Dr. W. W. Oliphant (1961-1962); Dr. Calkin (1962-1963); Dr. A. W. Perepelitsa (1963-1966); Dr. K. H. Sturdevant (1966-1969); Dr. R. N. Buckley (1969-1970); Dr. D. W. Harrison (1970-1971); Dr. E. C. Kraft (1971-1979); Dr. L. Laguno (1980-1983); Dr. Osorio (1983-1984); Dr. E. C. Kraft (1985-1989); Dr. A. Rocero (1988-1989); Dr. E. C. Kraft (1989-1990); Dr. E. Odira (1990-2004); Dr. E. Solis (2004-2005); Dr. J. R. O. Owaka (2006-2007). Beginning in 2008, the administrative structure changed so that the hospital was administered by a chief executive officer: Joel Dalaguan (2007-2009); Eric Agembe (acting 2010-2013); Tobias Panyako (acting 2014); Lewis Ondiek (2014-2015); George Opundo (2015-present).

SOURCES

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Kendu Adventist Hospital Board Minutes, 18-90 of April 3, 1990. Kendu Adventist Hospital Archive.

Kimanthi, Kennedy and Faith Nyamai, "Kenyan Nurses End Their 5-Month Strike After Deal with State." Accessed August 22, 2019, <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Kenyan-nurses-end-4-month-strike-after-deal-with-State/1056-4166940-mo35skz/index.html>.

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NOTES

1. "Kenya Hospital," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1926), 284.

2. Ibid.; *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), s.v. "Kendu Adventist Hospital."
 3. Kendu Adventist Hospital Board Minutes, 18-90 of April 3, 1990, Kendu Adventist Hospital Archive.
 4. Kendu Adventist Hospital Board Minutes, 15-90 of April 3, 1990, Kendu Adventist Hospital Archive.
 5. Brigid Chemweno and Paul Ogemba, "Apology to Kenyans as Doctors' Strike Ends with Return-To-Work Formula," accessed August 22, 2019, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001232717/apology-to-kenyans-as-doctors-strike-ends-with-return-to-work-formula>.
 6. Kennedy Kimanthi and Faith Nyamai, "Kenyan Nurses End Their 5-Month Strike After Deal With State," accessed August 22, 2019, <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Kenyan-nurses-end-4-month-strike-after-deal-with-State/1056-4166940-mo35skz/index.html>.
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