



## CENTRAL AFRICA MEDICAL MISSION

NOVEMBER 2020



When the decision was made late March to close down the Lutheran Mobile Clinic here in Malawi, it was at a time when the conventional wisdom was that Covid-19 would sweep through the country like a brush fire, that our operations might carry the disease to the villages, and that LMC was not equipped in any way to cope with the number of potential Covid-19 patients. We all prayed that Malawi would be spared this terrible affliction especially because the government had a very limited supply of ventilators and PPE to help fight the disease.

It is now six months later, and by and large Covid -19 has not devastated sub-Saharan Africa. Many Malawians including some professional staff in the Ministry of Health believe that Covid is no longer a threat to Malawi. Official reports say that around 5,900 people total have tested positive with about 185 deaths. New cases are running at around 5 to 10 a day. That is great news and we must thank The Lord for so far sparing this country.

However, that is not the whole story. Testing is limited and people are only being tested if they present with two or three Covid symptoms. The Malawian population is relatively young - almost 75% of the population is under the age of 30. The result is a high number -over 90% - are asymptomatic cases. We have heard an anecdotes of a business testing employees and found that five out six men in one office tested positive and had no symptoms at all. People's lifestyles also play a role in keeping Covid at bay, Malawians are generally pretty fit, most activities take place outdoors and obesity is rare.

Even with all this good news about Covid in Malawi, the Lutheran Mobile Clinic isn't taking any chances. We restarted our clinics on October 13, but our operations have changed. To minimize crowding, we no longer have all of our patients come early in the morning. Currently we offer under- fives and outpatient clinics in the morning with antenatal, family planning and outpatient clinics in the afternoon. We now travel in two ambulances instead of one to comply with government regulations regarding crowding in vehicles. Staff and volunteers wear masks and aprons. We have constructed fences around our buildings to create a compound and we then only allow a small number of people into the compound at a time. In the past we could easily have 30 or 40 people inside our 20 feet by 40 feet building where now it is 5-6. Patients are required to wear a mask and wash hands before entering the compound. So far, we have been able to supply masks to those who do not have one – but most do. Volunteers keep people socially distanced while waiting in line, and people are screened for Covid-19 symptoms before entering the compound. Our nurses and clinicians then conduct their consultations outside of the building, on a shaded veranda – unless the patient needs an injection or examination in private.

As always, we treat patients who are diagnosed with illnesses like malaria, skin rashes, ear and eye infections, asthma, epilepsy, hypertension, intestinal infections, and injuries. We have devotion for those waiting to be seen, preached by Vicar Kalima, or one of our church elders, or Pastor Beza. What also hasn't changed is the caring Christian focus of the clinic work, and the high standard of care we give. We will continue to monitor our procedures and the state of the pandemic in Malawi, continuing health teaching and preventive measures, to ensure safety for our patients and staff.

Please continue to pray for the people of Malawi and Zambia and that God continues to protect them from this scourge. Please also pray for CAMMC, our expats and African staff, to keep them safe and to help us do our best for those we serve.

God Bless

Gary Evans – Field Director.