

# Learning to rely on patient histories and physical exam skills in Ghana

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In 2016, the Centre for International Child Health supported seven talented clinical trainees who chose to pursue child-focused global health electives in Nepal, Uganda, Botswana, Ghana and South Africa. This support is a key part of CICH's vision of partnering to advance children's health globally.

Odion Kalaci, a second year pediatrics resident at UBC, spent one month at the [Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital](#) (KATH) in Kumasi, Ghana. Built at the heart of the country's road network, KATH receives referrals from across Ghana, with child health as a large focus: on a yearly basis, KATH treats over 31,000 children. Many suffer from illnesses not unlike those seen daily at BC Children's, including asthma and bronchiolitis, but many cases are ones that are not frequently seen in Vancouver, including malaria, neonatal sepsis, severe malnutrition and advanced cancers.

For Odion, working at KATH was an opportunity to learn how skilled health professionals in resource-poor environments make the best of difficult situations. In Ghana, hospital stays and health worker salaries are paid for by the government. But patients themselves must pay for most medications, blood work, imaging, and other diagnostic tests. For Ghanaians, 25% of whom live below the national poverty line, even a simple blood test is often out of financial reach. *"The health care practitioners at KATH are excellent and are able to accomplish a lot for their patients with the resources available to them. Many patients are being managed without diagnoses and have prolonged stays in hospital. Subsequently, this has made the local physicians more reliant on patient health history and physical exam skills than physicians in the Western world,"* said Odion.

Odion, who always felt welcomed at the hospital and in the communities he visited, knows that his month in Ghana is just the beginning of his work in global health: *"I have made lifelong friendships with Ghanaian colleagues that I will cherish. It is a country that I am 'Ghana' miss!"* More broadly, the partnership between BC Children's and KATH will continue. Teams at both



Odion in front of KATH in Ghana

hospitals have embarked on an ambitious joint project to develop guidelines, standards, and objectives for pediatric training for the West African College of Physicians.