

Experience in the Field

Professor Martin Corbally Consultant Paediatric Surgeon at Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin gave an informative account of the Paediatric Exchange Programme, Vietnam of which he is the founder.

In 2002 the Christina Noble Foundation approached Professor Corbally about a specific skills shortage in Paediatric Surgery in the Children's Hospital #2, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. However while the Foundation would provide local support there was no funding available. The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) and Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin originally funded the programme, but for the last three years has been funded solely by Irish Aid.

Professor Corbally gave a some brief statistics about Vietnam and described how basic facilities were at the local hospital when they arrived and what equipment needed to be brought over. He described some of the ethical dilemmas they faced such as flying in and out of Vietnam without providing after care and resolved to fly back if necessary. There was also initially a shortage of equipment in the recovery unit but monitors have been bought locally and there has been some changes to post-operative practice.

Examples of operations performed under the Programme include Posterior Saggital Anorectoplasty, Persistent Cloaca, Imperforate Anus and Reverse Gastric Tube. Professor Corbally emphasized the two-way nature of the exchange programme. For example performing twenty-five Anorectoplasty operations in one week in Vietnam that are rarely performed at home means Irish surgeons can up-skill while organizing the operations in workshops enable local surgeons to learn the same skills. Now Irish surgeons no longer need to perform these operations there.

Recently they've focused on Paediatric Cardiovascular Surgery and agreed to train three general surgeons as Paediatric cardiac surgeons as well as two doctors to run the cardiopulmonary bypass machine. Future wider goals involve bringing skills to other countries including Tanzania. While future funding is an issue, Professor Corbally emphasized the need to have short, medium and long term plans.