

Cheryl Cowles, M.D. is a full-time missionary physician serving at Tenwek Hospital in the OB/GYN department. This recent reflection, originally shared with the donors who support her work at Tenwek, describes the blessings and challenges she faces every day.

A young mother would come to our back door with a new baby tied to her back in normal African style. She would explain her plight of a husband who had “chased” her away (an equivalent of divorce) as he could not support this second son. Her mother had died and her father was “a drunkard.” She had no support whatsoever. She was desperate enough to come asking for help from missionaries who obviously had some resources.

Mercy was fairly literate and wanted to be able to take care of herself but unable with a new baby needing constant care. She was insistent and a bit annoying as she presented to our homes on a regular basis. A small bit of food was only a day to day survival tactic. Tenwek Community Health was able to investigate and legitimize her need. She is now in a sewing program with child care to enable her to make a sustainable living with her willing hands and hard work. She is learning daily about the love of Jesus in this program.

We had a patient with severe diabetes now compromised with a pregnancy that was making blood sugar management nearly impossible. She had already lost a leg and fingers of her hand to this disease. She had many complications with infections and then elevated blood pressure as well. She then nearly lost her baby as he was born with severe prematurity at 27 weeks.

Incredibly, day by day, this son survived. Four months later they were both discharged with an impossible debt to the hospital. She and her husband had literally sold everything they owned and were still unable to come close to the bill. Your donations funneled through our needy patient fund allowed her to be discharged to the relatives home. She ended back in the hospital, nearly losing her other leg with compassionate funds again coming to the rescue. She has a husband who is uncharacteristically loving and committed. He is now being helped by Community Health and their local church to help him begin a business and get on the track of self-sufficiency.

I have a medical “team” that I fall in love with over and over again... because it changes every week or two with interns coming and going with different schedules. These are young, strong believers who have come to Tenwek because they too desire to serve God. They are each uniquely gifted, smart, willing to work diligently and have hearts for the ones we are treating.

This was a difficult week. We have a young mother who is going home without her full term baby, lost at the brink of delivery. We have a baby going home without his mother who never awakened from her cesarean section (and hysterectomy and transfer to Tenwek with a devastating diagnosis of malignant hyperthermia). We have a mother and baby that will be buried together in spite of a valiant effort to save the baby during the mother’s code in the emergency room. We wept together in mourning.

We remembered that Jesus wept with Martha and Mary. We felt His presence. We were cognizant that the Bible describes death as the “last enemy.” We were comforted that His presence is enough to guide us through the valley of the shadow of death.

We are incredibly grateful for you! Your generous giving is allowing us to serve in Kenya in many areas of ministry and medical work. It is our privilege to represent your faithful obedience and compassion for the “least of these.”