

**Saturday, January 13, 2018**

Hi, this is Deb Winters writing from the airport in Brussels as our time in Liberia for this year has come to an end and we are heading home. We left the Phebe Compound Friday January 12 at 6 AM US EST and if all continues to go well we should reach Reinholds, PA around 5 PM January 13 and then Sarah, Andrew and Allison have another hour drive back to Wayne, PA.

The last part of our trip took an unexpected turn as two days before we were to start our travel home Gary developed an upper respiratory infection which began heading towards his lungs. This was potentially dangerous for three reasons: 1) because of Gary's Parkinson's he has been warned that he is very susceptible to developing pneumonia, 2) we bring the standard medicines with us on every trip and it wasn't until Gary developed a fever that we began to read the dosage directions only to find the warning on all of our cold medicines that they were harmful to anyone who has Parkinson's disease, and 3) as a remnant of the ebola crisis they take everyone's temperature before you can board any plane leaving Liberia.

Over 18 years ago Gary started helping to rebuild Phebe Hospital as Liberia's civil war was ending and now here we were in Phebe's emergency ward seeking treatment. Their care for Gary was excellent as they did a full chest X-ray, ran some blood test and specifically checked for Malaria which can sometimes mask itself as a developing cold.

They prescribed an immediate intravenous injection of antibiotic and medicines to help reduce his fever, help him feel better and enable him to board the plane to the USA where our Doctor would be able to give him a thorough check up.

The intravenous nurse was telling us how excited her daughter was to finally get on the tuition scholarship program (TSP) of God's Precious Children just at the point she was putting the needle into Gary's vein. After she left, I kiddingly told Gary he was lucky she was not one of the parents we had to turn away!

When the intake nurse asked us why we were there, we told her of Gary's condition and the complications Parkinson's could cause. I asked her if they had Parkinson's in Liberia and her simple answer was, "yes". She went on to explain that her husband has Parkinson's and in Liberia 10 Parkinson's pills cost \$17 United States Dollars (USD). It is not unusual for a Parkinson's patient to use 10 pills in one day.

Based on the website <https://www.minimum-wage.org/international/liberia> where the average civil servant's salary is \$43 USD per month, this medicine is almost impossible to afford. She went on to say one of her sons is presently working in South Korea and is hoping to be able to buy Parkinson's medicine there at a much cheaper rate.

For us it was a sobering thought as we realized how very blessed we are to live in the United States with its health care system despite all of its problems. It was also very gratifying for us to see how well Phebe Hospital took care of Gary and to know that many of the nurses are TSP graduates. Although we will miss our friends in Liberia, it will be good to get home and especially to have a HOT shower again!

Oops, they are starting to board our plane!

In Christ's service, Deb