

Lance's Rwanda Journey...

Lance B. Mitchell started his healthcare journey as a Class II Paramedic in the Greater Toronto Area in 1984 and worked in this capacity until 1991 when he chose a career change, pursuing cardiovascular perfusion. After gaining experience as a Perfusion Assistant in *Toronto General Hospital* through the American contractor, *Psicor*, he was successful in his application to *Michener Perfusion Program*.

His was immediately hired as a Perfusionist at *Toronto General*, working until 1998 when he chose to pursue employment in Halifax, NS. He worked full-time in Halifax doing both adult and pediatric perfusion and was *Team Lead* from 2013 (time of *Team Lead* inception) until 2019. During this time, he was responsible for *Cardiovascular Perfusion Services* at two adult hospitals (*Queen Elizabeth II* and *Victoria General*), as well as the pediatric hospital (*IWK*).

During his time in Halifax, he has assisted several other Canadian cardiac programs by doing locums in Toronto, Newfoundland, Saskatoon, Regina, Vancouver, and Hamilton. He has also done cardiac surgery missions in China and Africa during his tenure in Halifax.

As he was approaching retirement, Lance was asked to participate in a *Nova Scotia Health Cardiac Surgery* initiative in Rwanda by Dr. Kier Stewart. Shortly afterwards, pediatric surgeon, Dr. David Horne became involved and asked Lance to assist in organizing/providing perfusion care for pediatric cases.

In November 2019, Lance and a small number of staff from *Nova Scotia Health* (surgery, anesthesia, nursing) took a trip to Rwanda in order to assess the scope of the mission (hospital/staffing/hardware and consumables in order to plan for a successful trip in March 2020).

Unfortunately, with the global pandemic, the trip was postponed to 2022. Because it had been over 2 years since the initial site assessment, a small group went back to Rwanda for a 2nd time prior to doing the mission.

After that trip, they realized they needed to bring considerably more supplies than originally planned, including their own cardiopulmonary bypass packs

(*Terumo* packs from Kenya for pediatrics and adult). These perfusion packs needed to be revised to ensure that they would be compatible with the existing heart.

In addition to perfusion supplies, they essentially needed to take all their own consumables. The responsibility of arranging and supervising fell to Lance, who acted as the supply chain coordinator.

In May, they returned to Rwanda to do cases: one week of adult cases and one week of pediatrics. The cases were mostly valve replacements, either single or double Valves for adults and ASD's and VSD's with a valve or two for the pediatric cases. Being the supply chain coordinator, having all the appropriate disposables was the most stressful part of the trip. In the end, it was a successful trip.

In January 2022, the team returned to do a week of adult cases. While *King Faisal Hospital* in Rwanda supplied pump packs on this trip, it still a lot of disposables the team needed to bring.

The objective of these trips was not only to do cases, but also to educate the local healthcare staff with the goal of being independent of outside assistance. The local healthcare team consists of a cardiothoracic surgeon/anesthesiologist and perfusionist. The local perfusionist, Peter Adams pumped about half of the adult cases.

The next trip is in May 2023 then again in October 2023.

For his work coordinating and participating in this humanitarian effort, Lance was awarded the *Queen's Silver Jubilee*, recognizing his efforts with this important humanitarian effort.