



Training Center Spotlight: Nairobi Training Center

Dr. Miriam Muriithi Gatehi

MbChB (UoN), MMED Internal Medicine (Agakhan University), GI Fellow (WGO)

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My admission into the WGO Training Center program in Nairobi for 2021-2022 was exhilarating to say the least, and I quickly presented an acceptance letter to my supervisors. We met with them a few weeks later to orient us. Our main supervisors are Prof. Elly Ogutu (Director of the Nairobi Training Center), Dr. Stephen Onyango, Dr. Jongsup Lee and Dr. Ngugi.

During the first meeting, the excitement was palpable among the new trainees. My first year colleagues were Dr. Rupal Maru and Dr. Okanga. The first day was an introduction to the unit as well as an orientation of what our objectives were for the program.



First year WGO fellows with Dr. Lee: From left: Dr. Rupal Maru, Dr. Jongsup Lee, Dr. Okanga, Dr. Miriam Muriithi



From Left: Dr. Olivia Kyeni, Dr. Rupal Maru, Dr. Jongsup Lee, Dr. Miriam Muriithi.



Demonstration with students at the endoscopy unit

I clearly remember our first reporting day which was an unusually warm day full of bird's chirping. We entered a long corridor which exited to the Endoscopy unit. There we saw two main theatres, a recovery room, procedure room, doctor's office and staff room. For the number of patients waiting at the lobby, the unit appeared relatively small though accommodating. The unit is relatively busy with an average of 25-30 procedures per day.

Procedures performed here include Upper GI endoscopy, Lower GI colonoscopy, therapeutics, esophageal stenting, dilatation, peg tube, cauterization, polypectomies as well as ERCs. Students are expected to report daily from 8am-5pm with one free day in-between the week which is reserved for research. The first year trainees have an observatory role for one month during which we undertake an intense training on scope handling as well as cleaning. The second month is reserved for an introduction to upper GI diagnostic endoscopy. Dr. Jongsup Lee was our main lecturer in this where we had set targets over a 12 week period.

I recall our first target which was intubating the stomach pylorus, a procedure which gave us sleepless nights for three weeks! I remember reading extensively on upper GI techniques and eagerly watching videos which looked daunting at first. During our tea break, the first year trainees would lament how hard it was to intubate the pylorus. If only we knew that in 6 months' time, we would be performing OGDs literally with our eyes closed. I remember the first student to intubate the pylorus was my colleague Dr. Rupal Maru who had to buy pizza for the whole department as a gift for the teaching received. She was elated. Dr. Okanga and I would soon catch up and realize that teamwork was more important than who competitively reached a goal first. Together we would achieve considerably more. The nurses in endoscopy have been very patient and willing to assist us even now as we perfect our colonoscopy and therapeutic skills.



The endoscopy team of nurses and staff



The endoscopy team of physicians and nurses

It is important to note that the wards and clinic play an integral part in our learning. We enjoy procedures more, but it is mandatory that all fellows perform two ward rounds per week as well as a full day of clinic on Thursdays. On most evenings, we have group work or weekly classes which are conducted online. Morbidity, mortality and grand round meetings are reserved for once a month.



WGO fellows with visiting faculty

Currently we are perfecting our skills in colonoscopy and therapeutic upper and lower GI procedures.

We have developed a strong bond with our senior graduating class of 2022 as well as our lecturers, nurses, support staff, not to mention our patients. We have had our high moments such as when I performed my first polypectomy but also some low moments such as losing patients with advanced cancer or liver failure. At the end of the day, what I realize is that despite my deep love for gastroenterology, I need to maintain a balanced life for my physical and mental health.

I strive to incorporate daily exercise, meditation, meeting with friends and family outside of my gastroenterology training. We have informal meetings with our lecturers where we share meals as well as celebrate important life milestones like birthdays or anniversaries. One such occasion was a farewell party for one of our lecturers Dr. Jongsup Lee who took one year leave to travel to his home country Korea. He has been invaluable to our training and we value him deeply.



WGO fellows (Dr. Miriam Muriithi, Dr. Rupal Maru and Dr. Linda Gathara) relaxing at a coastal event

Going into my second year, I hope to continue practicing my skills. I have a keen interest in gastroenterologic oncology and hope to complete my study on esophageal cancer. The title of my study

is “Nutritional Outcomes in Advanced Ca Oesophagus patients with Oesophageal stents vs PEG tube.”
Thereafter my dream is to work in a remote area in Kenya and help as many patients there as I can.

Lastly, I thank the World Gastroenterology Organisation for providing me with this opportunity to train in my dream specialty. I do not take it for granted. *Asante!* (the Kiswahili word for thank you).