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## Medical Education in Malawi

### Professor Neil Kennedy

In a highly informative lecture, Professor Kennedy discussed his tenure as Professor of Paediatric Medicine in Blantyre, Malawi. Whilst highlighting the stark differences in healthcare provision between the UK and Malawi, he also offered insight into his personal reasons for working in Sub Saharan Africa and his return to Queen's.

The lecture began with an overview of Malawi; geographic, demographic and economic metrics were presented with a brief insight into World Health Organisation data relating to Malawi's performance on health outcomes in relation to countries with similar GDP. The relative sparseness of doctors was highlighted, and an explanation of the correlation between improved healthcare spending and improved outcome was noted.

Comparing the cost, logistics and philosophies of training medical staff, Professor Kennedy offered a comprehensive look at the Malawian healthcare system, with an explanation of the trends in recruitment and training from the mid 1990's to the mid 2010's. He highlighted the demographic variety encountered in Malawi, from rural villages to dense urban sprawl with fewer medical graduates taking up posts in rural practice, where ~80% of the Malawian population reside.

The MBBS programme in Malawi was explained with insight into typical timetables and efforts to introduce medical students to rural medicine. There was a focus on child health and obstetrics & gynaecology, given the mortality associated with young people in Sub Saharan Africa. The often chaotic clinical world into which medical graduates enter was described. Also, Professor Kennedy highlighted the focus on educating graduates about the treatment of malaria given the endemic nature of the disease. He also gave a brief explanation of the assessment methods used in Malawi, with multiple choice questions and OSCE examinations, and examples of each. Measures being taken to reduce the likelihood of "brain drain" were explained and Professor Kennedy suggested that access to improved post graduate training was the prime reason for graduates to remain in Malawi.

Finally, Professor Kennedy took questions from the audience, both virtual and in person. He explained the importance of providing better psychological support to graduates, many of whom experienced long on calls and extremely difficult situations as new doctors. He also developed the idea that his experiences in Africa were a good prelude to his Professorship at Queen's during the COVID-19 pandemic.