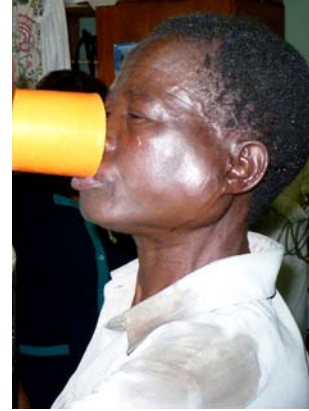




Press Release

Surgeons OverSeas (SOS) Malawi Esophageal Cancer Palliative Care Program: A LIVESTRONG Global Cancer Commitment

For 6 months Mary B. had been progressively unable to swallow food; when admitted to the hospital she could not swallow liquids - not even her own saliva. Prior to the implementation of the Malawi Esophageal Cancer Palliative Care Program, Mary, like hundreds of previous Malawians with inoperable esophageal cancer, would have been sent home to die; her family would have watched in horror as she slowly starved to death. Today, however, Mary can eat and drink.



As a **LIVESTRONG Global Cancer Commitment**, **Surgeons OverSeas (SOS)**, the flagship program of the **Society of International Humanitarian Surgeons (SIHS)**, along with the Lions Club of Blantyre and the Malawi Press Trust, has implemented an exciting and innovative strategy to assist patients with inoperable esophageal cancer throughout the entire African country of Malawi.

In Malawi, an impoverished country of 14 million people, esophageal cancer is the 3rd most common cancer, but few patients receive treatment. Most patients come to the hospital too late to be cured, however, a small metallic mesh tube (stent) can be placed into the esophagus and used to push the tumor to the side, opening the blockage and allowing patients to eat. This procedure is not a cure, but patients get significant relief and often live comfortably for an additional 6-12 months - a much better alternative to dying horribly in a matter of weeks.



To assist patients with incurable esophageal cancer a three part program including **surgeon training**, **nurse education**, and **research** was developed. The program first consisted of workshops held in the Malawian cities of Blantyre and Lilongwe. Physicians and surgeons learned to place stents and nurses learned about caring for patients with esophageal stents and how to educate the patients' family. A total of **18** local physicians and surgeons and **46** nurses from **15** hospitals received training.

The entire project was coordinated by **SOS** member, Dr. Leo Vigna and surgeon workshops were taught by Dr. Russell White, Chief of Surgery and Endoscopy, Tenwek Mission Hospital in Kenya, a recognized world expert in the insertion of these stents.

The final part of the project is research. Clinical data, including risk factors, symptoms, tumor size, and follow-up, along with biopsy specimens are being collected. These data will assist in providing a clearer picture of the problem and suggest solutions for prevention. Additionally, the data will be useful in advocating for additional resources to care of patients with esophageal cancer.

SOS President, Dr. Peter Kingham and SOS member Dr. Leo Vigna are delegates in Dublin, Ireland at the LIVESTRONG Global Cancer Summit: To arrange an interview, please email Dr. Kingham at peter@humanitariansurgeons.org. For further information please visit our website at www.surgeonsoverseas.org or follow us on Twitter at @SurgeonsSOS.



The **Society of International Humanitarian Surgeons (SIHS)** is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in New York, USA whose mission is to save lives in developing countries by improving surgical care through collaborative training, funding, and research initiatives. **Surgeons OverSeas (SOS)** is the flagship program of SIHS.