

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Medical equipment donations to low resource countries – a flawed process

By Bill Gentles

April 9, 2018

Toronto, ON.

The Canadian Medical & Biological Engineering Society recently completed a study on medical equipment donations to low resource countries.

The objectives were to determine the scope of these donations by Canadian charitable organizations and identify best practices.

The study found there are many opportunities for improvement – much donated equipment is never put into use by the recipients, because it is not what they need or lacks essential parts.

A video summarizing our recommendations can be viewed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R27CPPAwL1Y&feature=youtu.be>

Details

Problems with donated equipment include a lack of spare parts and accessories, lack of training, lack of supporting manuals, poor communication between the donor and the recipient hospital, lack of clear equipment specifications, unneeded equipment, and poor donor planning. A simple but all too frequent example is Canadian medical equipment that operates on 110 volts being sent to a country with a 220Volt electrical supply.

In the CMBES study, approximately 80 Canadian organizations and charities involved in medical equipment donations were identified. An online survey was sent to these organizations, and follow-up interviews were conducted with 16 of them.

In addition, through our partnership with the Biomedical Engineering Society of Ghana, we conducted a second survey of 28 health facilities in Ghana, who were recipients of medical equipment donations. Here are some anecdotal responses from recipients: “Some come without spare parts, some arrive not functioning, some come with missing accessories”, “Some of the equipment received are obsolete”, “The users are not asked what they actually need”. Despite these concerns, all respondents agreed that medical equipment donations benefitted their organization. But clearly there is much room for improvement.

To overcome the challenges for both parties, successful donor practices should include consultation with recipient countries to ensure needs are met, careful planning of the entire donation process to provide a clear plan, and finally monitoring and follow-up to facilitate long term success. It is clear that more effective collaboration and communication between Canadian donor organizations would reap tremendous benefits for recipient countries, and create opportunities to economize and improve the effectiveness of medical equipment donations.

To learn more about this project and other initiatives of CMBES:

<http://www.cmbes.ca/industry/international-outreach/current-projects>

This work was carried out with the aid of a grant from the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada.

Contact

To learn more about this project, please contact:

Bill Gentles, PhD., P.Eng., CCE,

Chair, CMBES International Outreach Committee,

25 Alberta Ave., Toronto M6H2R5, Canada

billgentles@sympatico.ca

+1 416 518 7161 (mobile)

###