Medicine and further training

Education, training, and continuous professional development with the transfer of specialist knowledge: Medical specialists regularly visit our hospitals to train local staff on site. The teams then work together to further develop medical specialties and optimise processes. These medical missions are important for the **education, training, and continuous professional development** of our Cambodian colleagues. Together with the chief physicians, a delegation from the Foundation Board, defined the following priorities for 2025:

- Oncology and pathology
- Gastroenterology
- Gynaecology and obstetrics
- Neonatology and neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)
- General intensive care medicine (PICU)
- Cardiology and cardiac surgery
- Visceral surgery
- Neurosurgery
- Image diagnostics
- Nephrology

In 2025, 16 international medical and surgical missions took place from Switzerland and France. Depending on the specialty, these missions are carried out annually or every two years. Those involved are mainly doctors and experts from the University Children's Hospital Zurich as well as other medical specialists from Switzerland and abroad.

NEW CANCER WARD IN SIEM REAP

While leukaemia in children has been treated in Phnom Penh for almost two decades, in autumn 2023 the team headed by Foundation Board Member Prof. Felix Niggli began treating other paediatric cancers, including **liver, kidney and brain tumours.** A precise diagnosis is essential for the adequate treatment of such tumours. With the support of a Swiss pathologist, the laboratory at Kantha Bopha Hospital, which was previously rudimentary, has been developed further in a targeted manner.

We use X-rays, ultrasound, magnetic resonance imaging, and computer tomography, among other things, to make correct diagnoses.

In 2025, there were over 360,000 examinations.

The intensive professional exchange between the on-site pathology laboratory and the pathology teams at Winterthur Cantonal Hospital and Zurich University Hospital now allows for **reliable tumour diagnoses** to be made for most children, resulting in tailored treatment. Although not all diagnostic options are always available and the therapeutic spectrum is still limited compared to Europe, effective tumour control has now been achieved in several hundred children with cancer.

In addition, **the hospitals in Phnom Penh closely work together**. For instance, if necessary, children treated in our hospital receive radiotherapy at another hospital in the city. There are also regular video conferences, known as tumour boards, where Cambodian colleagues discuss individual cases with a team of experts from Switzerland.

The progress made at our hospital in Phnom Penh has made it possible to **treat children with cancer at the Children's Hospital in Siem Reap from autumn 2025.** Our teams at both locations are highly motivated and dedicated to caring for children with cancer within the available resources. As not all of the children can be cured, providing dignified palliative care has also become one of their important tasks.

In the near future, we plan to **introduce additional diagnostic analyses** to enable tumours and leukaemias to be classified even more precisely. This will allow us to customise therapies more specifically. There is, of course, a desire to use newer therapeutic agents in future. However, the extent to which this can be realised depends largely on their availability and cost in Cambodia.

HELP WITH KIDNEY FAILURE

The focus of our nephrology mission was to optimise treatment for children with **acute kidney failure.** Prof. Dr. Wesley Hayes, from the University Children's Hospital Zurich, and the local team looked after children with various kidney problems, such as kidney inflammation and kidney failure. A key aspect of their work involved **peritoneal dialysis.** In the intensive care unit in Siem Reap, the team demonstrated how children are treated with this form of dialysis. The intensive care nurses practised preparing and connecting the dialysis set.

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Swiss medical students please contact Dr. Seraina Prader:

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The second focus was on **blood washing using a dialysis machine**. Using case studies, the team discussed which children would benefit most from this method. The Cambodian employees were highly committed, actively participating in the training sessions and providing positive feedback. They concluded that the mission had been extremely beneficial for the specialist staff and the children concerned.

FURTHER TRAINING IN DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING

In radiology, a team from the University Children's Hospital Zurich organised various training courses at both sites. PD Dr. Ralph Gnannt examined numerous **children with vascular malformations**. In over ten cases, he worked with the local radiologists to sclerotise the abnormal vessels from the inside. He also practised taking samples from organs or tumours.

Prof. Dr Christian Kellenberger reviewed the examination procedures for the new computer tomographs (replacement devices), discussed outdated additional images, and introduced a particularly **low-radiation programme for lung scans**. The examination protocols for the magnetic resonance scanner were improved in collaboration with specialists from image diagnostics, neurosurgery, and cardiac surgery. For example, these protocols were developed for cases involving vascular malformations in the brain, kidneys, and urinary tract, as well as the heart. The team has also introduced a very fast chest examination that provides images in near-real time.

HOSPITAL UTILISATION

The average bed occupancy rate in Phnom Penh was 126 per cent, in our hospital in Siem Reap over 138 per cent and in the Maternité 107 per cent.