

# The Virtual Doctors Report

## Insight & Update – Winter 2017



We are ending the year on a high by proudly announcing that we are now delivering our service into 40 sites across Zambia and are on target to fulfil our strategic plan of supporting 50 sites in Zambia by the end of 2017. We are also poised to roll out a multiple pilot into Malawi very soon. None of this would have been possible without the generous support of our donors. We would like to share some highlights from the past six months with you and thank you warmly for your ongoing interest in our work.

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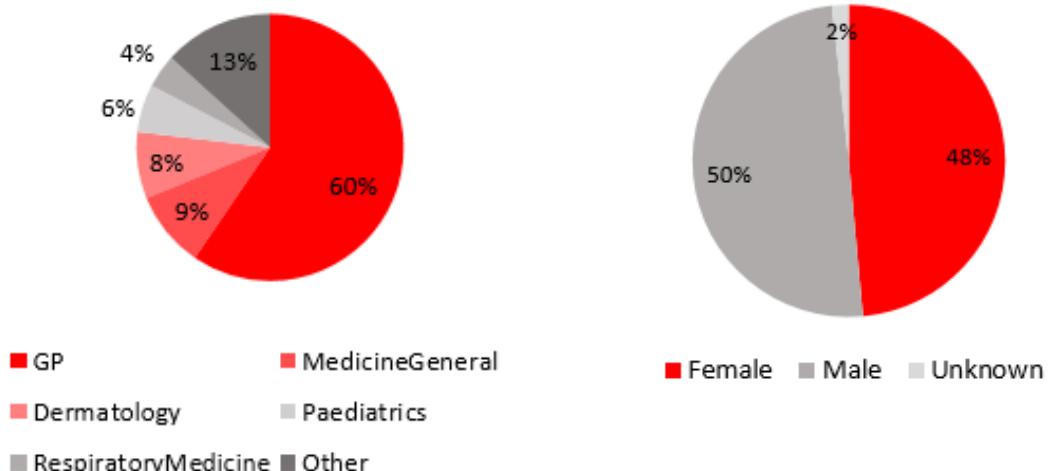
### Update on Zambia Operations

#### Usage data and impact of the service

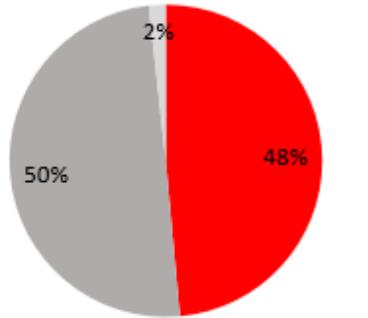
Expansion, enhanced communication with our beneficiaries the Clinical Officers (CO) and overcoming technical challenges has resulted in higher usage throughout the year. Over the past two quarters we have seen a 74 % increase in patient cases compared to the first half of 2017, with October a record month.

The graphs below provide further information on the valuable data gathered by the VDrs app, particularly in comparison with our summer report's, and will feed into our M&E report. HIV status data is especially significant for disease surveillance control.

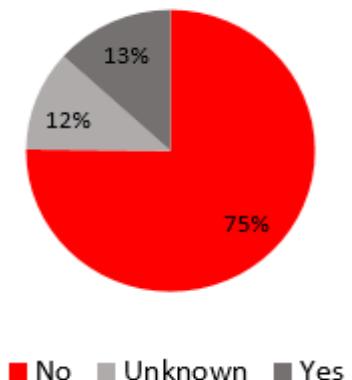
Cases by Speciality



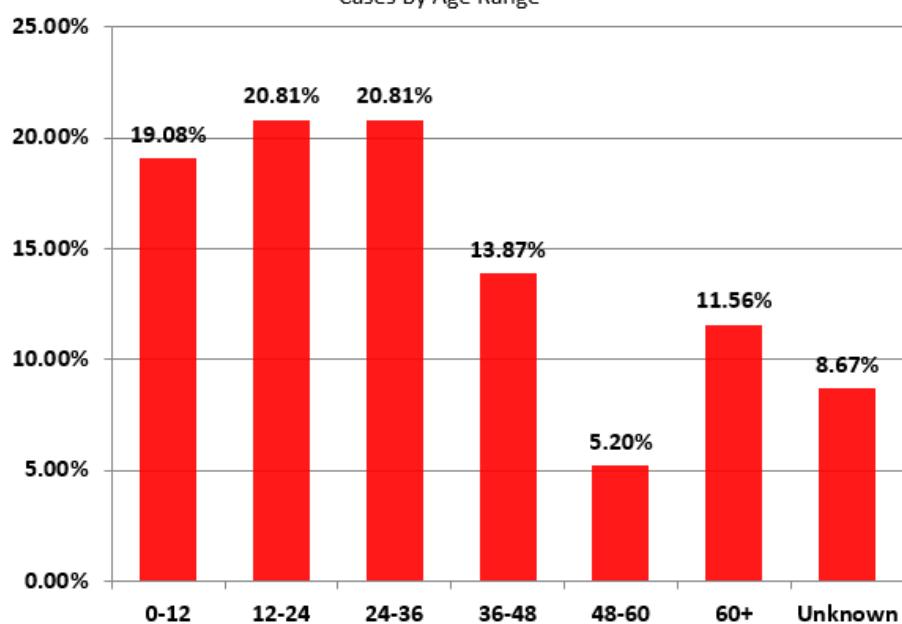
Gender



HIV Positive?



Cases By Age Range



We have introduced a 'paper tool' enabling COs to gather cases from health workers based in clinics that do not yet have direct access to our service. COs are generally encouraged to share the service with colleagues by submitting cases on their behalf.

In the summer we have set up a WhatsApp group for first line trouble-shooting; it has been very successful, improving communication with our COs, enabling us to pre-empt issues and improving quality of service and usage. Our COs have also been enjoying the brand new VDrs Forum where they can exchange with our Volunteer Doctors beyond the confines of patient cases.

An example of a Forum introduction from a CO:

*Hi, my name is Godwell Siame Chilapupa, from Zambia. I am a Clinical Officer general based in Luangwa district Lusaka province, the remotest district of Lusaka it's also a valley meaning it gets hot up to 49°C but we endure the heat to save lives, I worked in Kalulushi in Copperbelt province for a private clinic. Am so passionate about medicine and helping people around Zambia. I dream of having my own health facility not because I want money but I want to improve the service delivery at the lowest prices possible to meet universal coverage. Am delighted to work with VDrs it has improved my skills and knowledge at least if I refer a case and submit to VDrs next time same case I manage very well. The team organising VDrs I salute you all. God bless you all. GSC.*

This forum, along with a series of podcasts (currently four) produced by our Medical Director Dr Fran Fieldhouse and her volunteer assistant Dr Minnie LaCamp, is part of our shifting focus onto enhancing the education experience of clinical officers. Such testimonials are proof that the service is supporting COs and their personal development as well as helping patients.

To underpin the educational element of our service, we have submitted our expression of interest in becoming a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provider with the Health Professionals Council of Zambia (HPCZ) and are currently awaiting feedback.

## Summer Trip to Zambia



In September, Executive Director Huw Jones travelled to Zambia with board Chairman Ian Kerr and Trustees James Phiri and Ian Clarke. The purpose of the visit was to have operational meetings with the Ministry of Health and support our beneficiaries, as usual, but also to recruit a Full-Time In-Country Project Manager (see section 3).

As part of their clinics tour, they visited our supported health sites of Chikupi and Chanyanya (Kafue District), Mount Makulu (Chilanga) and Ngwerere (Chongwe District). At the latter we met Kennedy Mulenga, one of the more prolific Clinical Officer (CO) users of our service and attended his very popular Under-5s clinic (photo below left).

Follow this link to view an interview of Kennedy and his experience of the VDrs service: <https://www.virtualdoctors.org/clinicalofficers/>.

*Kennedy Mulenga, CO at Ngwerere Rural Health C*



*Ngwerere RHC Under 5s Clinic*



*Technology Trustee Ian Clarke (with new Nurse Sylvia Bwalya) carrying out some connectivity testing at Chanyanya, where our service beneficiaries have experienced technical issues.*



*"I'm enjoying the program."  
VDrs service user*

*Chikupi RHC's motorbike ambulance*

## In the field



### Case study Chikupi RHC in Kafue – Shingles

A 9-year-old was brought by her family to Chikupi health centre with a four-day history of rash on her face. She had vesicles (small blisters) on and around her eyelid and was clearly in pain. The eye itself was quite red. She was HIV negative. The clinical officer had started her on some antibiotic eye drops and some oral antiviral medicine. He sent a query to the Virtual Doctors via the app, along with a good clear photograph. The virtual doctor confirmed this was ophthalmic shingles (shingles involving the eye).

The main concern is the eye and in the UK this patient would be seen by an eye specialist to examine the cornea, the clear layer in front of the eye and possibly put the patient on steroid eye drops. However, this was not an option open to the Zambian clinical officer. He was advised to patch the eye to protect it, bathe it and use antiviral eye drops if available.

### Clinic Profile

Chikupi RHC/Kafue District  
Clinical Officer: Grader Sialwiindi



Number of patients seen by CO daily	50
Number of patients seen by CO weekly	350
Number of patients seen by CO monthly	1400
Typical ailments treated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ear, nose and throat infections</li><li>• Non-bloody diarrhoea</li><li>• Pneumonia</li><li>• Skin infections</li></ul>

Special clinics Under 5s every Thursday

### Feedback from Clinical Officers

*“Virtual Doctors is helping me learn more new things every day. I really appreciate”*

*“Mostly, I present the cases that I would like to have a clear light on how to do the management and all the recommended investigations. With the information the doctors have provided this far, I find this app to be very helpful and educative. Thank you”*

*“The interaction with the Doctor helped me manage the case better. Thankful very much for the advice from the Doctor.”*

## Expansion

The VDrs service is now available in 40 health centres and Hospitals. Most recently we set up 9 new sites in Chongwe District: Chongwe UHC 1, Chongwe RHC, Chongwe UHC 2, Kasisi, Katoba, Mpango, Mwalumina, Palabana, Lwiimba. This marks the first time the service is provided in Urban Health Centres (UHC) in addition to Rural Health Centres (RHC) and District Hospitals (DH).

Chongwe is a District where we have already seen very good uptake from several Cos. These more experienced service users can now help organic growth by training new COusers: Jonathan Tapalu (Chongwe DH) has provided the training (photo left) for the new COs (photo right)



Our site at Luangwa DH is also now active and generating cases courtesy of Clinical Officer George Mulenga, who produced the wonderful photo used for our Seasons Greetings this year.

In 2018 we look forward to expanding to more Districts and sites in Zambia, with Central Province as the next Province selected for expansion. We aim to achieve our goal of 50 sites by the end of 2017.

**Malawi introduction** – is in process. The Executive Director and Chairman will travel to Lilongwe in January to sign an MOU with the Ministry of Health which marks the official start of the Virtual Doctors Project in Malawi. A substantial fundraising drive is required to help us realise this, which will be a significant milestone in the history of the Virtual Doctors.

## Other

### Team News

Tyrell Junius is now working full-time as In-Country Project Manager based out of our small office in Lusaka. With his in-depth knowledge of the Virtual Doctors and his increased availability Tyrell will be able to further support all the CO's and the operations on the ground. He will also focus on further driving up our usage numbers and pushing the expansion of our sites in Zambia.

*As always, we would like to make a special mention of our 51 volunteer doctors and the other volunteers who enable the organisation to function.*

### Fundraising: Winning Resources and gaining support

All of our funding is donated through the generosity of the general public and from some loyal and newly found grant and foundation funders. We just can't thank you enough. Our fundraising efforts must continue unrelentingly, as it is, of course, never easy with so many worthy causes in the not-for-profit domain who all deserve support! We should finish the year close to our reforecast of £180,000; this will fall short of the original budget, which is disappointing, and some plans will have been delayed as a result.

We often find that a barrier to receiving some funds is because we do not specifically target women or children and as a result find ourselves excluded from many grant-giving bodies. However, our service is aimed at helping those who need it most and the patients who attend the Clinics. We do not distort our statistics, segregate or discriminate to secure funds.

This autumn we launched our **Malawi Appeal** ([www.virtualdoctors.org/malawi-appeal/](http://www.virtualdoctors.org/malawi-appeal/)), supported by three key awareness and fundraising events at the Malawi High Commission, Lancing College near our administrative office in Shoreham-by-Sea and finally the official launch at the House of Lords in Westminster at the end of October.

We are seeing a slight uplift in our on-line donations and taking steps to improve our website by promoting various initiatives and ideas. We have had runners, walkers, cake bakers, Rotarians, Soroptimists, Church groups and Pupils all helping us this year by raising sponsorship or making donations and will continue to encourage this community activity.

Finally

We would like to end this report with our warmest wishes for the festive period and the new year ahead.



*Seasons Greetings*



*This is the VDr's Christmas card 2017.*

*We asked Clinical Officers in Zambia to submit a photograph for a competition and everyone agreed that this one below taken by George Mulenga (Luangwa DH) was a worthy winner.*

On behalf of all those patients who have recovered as a direct result of your support, we would like to extend a heartfelt thank you. Your ongoing support is making a considerable difference and we could not do what we do without your support.

Huw Jones - Executive Director

Ian Kerr Chairman of Board of Trustees

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