

A Kodak Moment

In my fifty plus years of nursing I have witnessed many changes in medical and surgical advancements all for the good of mankind prolonging and improving quality of life. That's great if you have access by means of a healthcare system and private funds , but give a thought to those who live in a developing world, whose who are disadvantaged through poverty, natural disasters ,political upheaval or just bad luck.

This is where my story beings

I am Australian by choice. I arrived in Australia post war with my migrant family and we struggled like so many but with hope and encouragement we did build a future .So it has always been my passion to identify and assist people less fortunate with hope that they can improve theirs lives and environment.

Nursing has taken me to many parts of the world working with surgical teams repairing cleft lips and palates bringing instant results to children and adults. People with these facial deformities are ostracised and in some communities they bring shame to their family and community.

On a mission to China six years ago an elderly couple brought a baby girl with a lip and palate for repair. We questioned the couple to reveal that they lived and worked at a garbage tip site and found the baby wrapped in newspaper. They took the baby girl home and started to raise her as their own. The couple were squatters from the north and they were not registered with the local council so they are not titled to any social service or health care.

There would also be a penalty for them to pay because of the "one child policy" as they already had 2 grown children.

The couple read in the paper that a surgical team was coming to repair cleft lips and palates free of charge. They arrived hoping that they would manage a consult on our first clinic day. They were very shy and it soon revealed that they had no compulsory registration papers and broke down and cried. One of the team member inquired into the problem and so we managed to by pass some red tape but still needed to pay for the hospital accommodation which was absorbed by our mission director.

This couple was obviously very poor but they loved this girl child. The baby had given them a purpose in life. The one child policy creates a problem for parents when a baby is female with a physical abnormality so she becomes non marriageable and disposal is the only way.

The team was very sympathetic so we collected money amongst ourselves for the couples accommodation in the city whilst they waited for the baby's operation to be performed.

The repaired was an excellent result and the expressions on the couple's faces when they were taken to recovery ward to see a normal beautiful baby was priceless. A real "Kodak Moment" Lots of tears all round.

We managed to buy some extras for the couple but were too proud to except money and goods. They returned the following year for the young child to have

her palate repaired . She and her elderly parents now lives a normal life and are accepted by the community.

I have been on many of these missions and there is always a lovely story to be told. My days in nursing are numbered but I am so lucky that my daughter has followed in my footsteps. She has done her first mission and was blown away with the experience. In 2016 we are doing a mother and daughter perioperative teaching mission to Bangladesh and Inner Mongolia where I will hand over the baton to her.

Nursing has been rewarding and fulfilling and has taken me to many parts of the world. Its a great profession with many possibilities and I have many cherished moments to reflect on when I can no longer remember the present but only the past.

Hiskelina Sollner (aka) Lyn Thorpe

NSWNA number 1089853