

# Rotary

## 2018 VTT Exchange Districts 9350/7890

### Rotary International Foundation Global Grant VTT Exchange

First report by Leandri Hattingh – VTT Team Leader, District 9350

June 2018

The experience as team leader on this Rotary VTT Exchange has been greatly enriching both on professional and personal levels. Not only did I gain valuable knowledge in the field of substance abuse and health care management – through experience, meetings, discussions, presentations and facility visits -- I also gained some good friends, both among our international hosts, and within my team.

Our full formal programme afforded us the opportunities to meet with various stakeholders in the management of substance abuse during pregnancy, across the spectrum of health care, social care, including patients themselves. We experienced an in-depth exposure to the various components required in addressing such a complex problem, and were impressed by the extent of collaboration between the different systems.

The practical lessons I am keen to explore further in our own environment include the facilitation of alternative social activities to alcohol or substance misuse in communities where substance use is the only available past-time – this is a project in which I think Rotary could have a significant role. Another interesting approach we were introduced to involves the solicitation of private funding for government research projects through a “pay-for-outcomes” model, which could potentially work in our environment. I was pleased to learn that our hosts had enthusiastically incorporated into their work what we know as “Kangaroo Care” in South Africa, and this reinforces the value of such an approach to early child care in infants born to mothers with substance use disorders. Our hosts have indicated that the interaction with us had shed new light on their own alcohol abuse problem; something they wish to explore with more vigour in the future.

Aside from the practical ones, there were two principle lessons which stood out for me like golden threads throughout our two weeks exchange. The one is to always question the status quo. This was particularly salient in the presentation and discussion by Dr. Matt Grossman at Yale University Hospital who illuminated the weak evidence underlying established practices in the care of patients with neonatal abstinence syndrome, and how, once the original assumptions had been questioned, a novel approach could be forged with great success. The other golden lesson was that everyone has a story. As simple and clichéd as that may seem, it is the lack of realisation of this that fuels stigma against mental

illness and substance use disorders – within communities, and within the health and social care delivery systems.

From a Rotary perspective, we had the privilege of attending the Rotary Club of Manchester's meeting, where we met with various Rotarians, a python, and a chinchilla. I had the opportunity to present on some of the projects in District 9350, and my team gave a brief overview of their projects in the mitigation of alcohol abuse in pregnant mothers and their communities. We also attended the multi-district Rotary conference in Plymouth, Massachusetts, where we presented on our VTT exchange programme experience and met with various Rotarians from across the states of Connecticut and Massachusetts. We listened to compelling presentations, including one on nuclear arms, and several on the Rotary's approach to membership sustainability. Our generous hosts also treated us to a local baseball game, several barbeques, and a weekend on the beautiful Niantic coast.

I am sincerely grateful to the Rotary International Foundation for this incredible experience, and look forward to applying what I've learnt in my profession. I also look forward to continuing to develop the relationship with District 7890, starting with hosting their incoming team in July 2018.



Our team: Me, Tersius Lambrechts, Tamzyn van den Heever, and Tinashe Tombe



Exchanging club banners



Team and hosts, and Rotary Manchester club president Ken Golden at the club meeting





One of the hospitals we visited, with Dr. Courtney Townsel on the far left, one of the incoming team members.



Attending the local baseball game with our hosts



Team and hosts at the multi-district Rotary conference. On the far right is District 7890 Governor David Mangs, fourth from the left is the incoming governor, Kate Sims.



Presenting at the Connecticut Hospital Association conference





A warm welcome from our hosts

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