



WALSHS

2025 Medical Bursary DR HANNAH RIENKS

WINNER

\$10,000



Dr Hannah Rienks - Professional Bio

PROJECT REPORT: KAGANDO HOSPITAL FISTULA CAMP

Walshs Medical Bursary Dr Hannah Rienks Saturday 23 August 2025

Dear Walshs Company Directors and Bursary Selection Committee,

It is with much appreciation that I wish to advise you of the successful completion of the 2025 Kagando Hospital Fistula Camp in Kasese, Uganda. Over two weeks, from August 2nd to August 14th, under the guidance of esteemed Professors Judith Goh and Hannah Krause, our team reviewed 108 patients and performed life-changing surgery for 85 women.

Twenty-two of these surgeries were paid for entirely by the Walshs Medical Bursary.

Nothing could have prepared me for our first day at Kagando Hospital. Over and over we heard the most harrowing stories of long, excruciating labours; stillborn children and horrific birth injuries. We heard about years of suffering – pain, leakage, embarrassment and isolation. When asked why they hadn't sought help earlier, inequity was always the answer – either they couldn't afford treatment, or the clinic they attended wasn't able to offer what they needed.

The resource inequity extended to the hospital itself, with so many stark differences to the healthcare system we often take for granted. The waiting room for patients to see us was a grassy hill under a tree. The post-operative ward was a large marquee on the edge of the hospital grounds, with no power, and minimal protection provided from the oppressive heat and heavy rains. Patients aren't provided food in hospital – a family member must accompany them to cook in the shared open-fire kitchen. Simple supplies like gloves and paracetamol were scarce and precious. The speculums we used to examine patients were rusty from many years of cleaning and re-use.

We met the most incredible nurses and doctors who worked so hard every day to care for their patients with what they had.

The operating theatres were an equally stark difference from home. The power dropped in and out.

There was no air conditioning or fans. Equipment such as lights and stools would break. Instruments that would be single-use at home would be carefully cleaned to allow re-use. Not a single glove or centimetre of suture material was wasted.

The expertise and patient teaching by the Professors made this an invaluable learning experience surgically, and it was incredible to see how they share their knowledge with the local nurses and doctors to leave a lasting impact even in their absence.

The work was hard. The days were long, the accommodation and food very basic, the mosquitoes aggressive, and the weather incredibly hot – I have never sweated as much as I did in those operating theatres. But the challenges we faced were nothing compared to those faced by the women. Seeing their transformations from first arrival to discharge, from shame and fear to relief and joy, made this the most rewarding work I have ever done. Even though we could barely speak a few words of each other's languages, the smiles and tears and hugs and singing expressed the most gratitude I'd ever felt.

I hope that the attached photos and videos will help you feel some of this gratitude. As is the case in many health systems in the developing world, there is no government-funded healthcare system and thus without kind donations such as the generous Walshs Medical Bursary, many women would simply continue to suffer. All staff on the trip were self-funded volunteers - we paid for our flights, transfers, food and accommodation, and the trip is undertaken in our own time. The equipment we took with us was donated.

Funds such as the Bursary that are generously donated to Professor Goh and Professor Krause's project AFR-500 <https://hada.org.au/project/africa-medical-training-in-africa-and-asia/> are used solely to settle the bill for patients' surgeries with the hospital finance office.

I wish to sincerely thank you for choosing this important cause for the 2025 Walshs Medical Bursary. This was a life-changing trip, not only for the women we treated, but for myself, and I look forward to returning as soon and as often as I can throughout my career.

Warm regards,
Dr Hannah Rienks

