

# The Center for Medical Missions'

## *e-Pistle*

### July 2010

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Welcome to this edition of the e-Pistle. Dave has written about a somewhat unusual subject in his management article. I'm sure most of you will be able to relate. I've suggested putting it under the 'Monitoring' category if you are compiling his articles.

You'll want to be sure to read Cura Animarum this month. But I warn you, it might feel as if your toes are being stepped on. How I wish I could learn more quickly!

I have included a couple of announcements. One is in regard to our Handbook for International Rotations and the other is about a place to go to find opportunities to serve.

If you haven't been to the CMM pages of the [www.cmda.org](http://www.cmda.org) website, you haven't seen our 'Where to Serve' pages. We happily list immediate opportunities for medical ministries that have need of personnel. It will be good to let your friends and colleagues know about these pages. Many of the positions are for periods of short duration.

Finally, this issue closes with some caution about digital distractions. I hope you find something that you can use to help you in ministry

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#### **Here are the links to this month's articles:**

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#### **To Catch a Thief - Section II: Monitoring**

by David Stevens, MD

Remember the suavely handsome Cary Grant and the soon to be princess Grace Kelley in the Oscar winning movie "To Catch a Thief"? A reformed jewel thief is suspected of returning to his former occupation and has to ferret out the real culprit in order to prove his innocence. The cat burglar has to be wily to catch the mouse that is eating other people's cheese. I didn't know

when I headed overseas as a medical missionary that catching thieves would also be part of my job description.

Many places in the world are full of corruption – embezzlement, theft, graft and bribery. The problem is compounded by poverty and family obligations. Family members who have jobs are expected to help with school fees. Men are often under huge pressures to acquire a dowry before getting married. In other places, parents may need to amass significant wealth to pay both a dowry and the wedding costs. These pressures can be overwhelming, even for Christians, and sometimes they succumb.

Unfortunately, mission institutions and their leaders are not exempt from dealing with these issues. I remember some days feeling more like a policeman than a missionary as I battled the many ways staff, patients and outsiders attempted to steal from our hospital and clinics.

- Sheets, blankets and pillows were thrown over the fence to friends and relatives or hidden under clothes as people went home.
- People snuck out of the hospital without paying their bill.
- A clerk replaced the carbon paper in the receipt book with a piece of cardboard. Later he put a piece of paper and carbon paper over the duplicate receipt and wrote in a lesser amount and then pocketed the difference. Over time he stole a huge amount of money.
- Armed robbers broke into the hospital one night, broke down the business office door and stole the hospital's cash.
- A cook took a hundred kilo bag of beans and hid it in his home.
- Medical equipment and medicines were stolen by staff so they could open their own "clinics" in the community. Most of them had little medical education.
- Empty antibiotic bottles were taken and filled with aspirin or other cheap medicines and sold as antibiotics.
- Used syringes and empty vials were taken, filled with water and used by "private practitioners" to inject patients.
- Medicine dispensers would give the patient half or none of their medicine dose and put the pills in their pocket.

I could go on and on, but here is the point. As good stewards, to insure we have the resources to treat patients and to avoid people in community being hurt by charlatans, we have the duty to stem the tide of pilfering and larceny. Here are a few principles that I learned that might be helpful to you.

1. Hire the Right People for the Right Jobs – I finally realized that I was corrupting good Christian men if I asked them to handle money. Women had fewer pressures and much more resistance to embezzlement and theft. So I made a policy that only women could work in the business office if at all possible. If not, we picked men who did not have financial pressures, were strong Christians and had a long record of honesty in other places.
2. Decrease Temptation – If things could not be sold or used easily, the temptation to steal them decreased. We imprinted our logo on sheets, towels, drapes and every other thing made of wood or cloth. We engraved it on metal objects. We threw

empty pill bottles, vials and syringes into the “placenta pit” – a deep hole in the ground full of placentas, body parts removed at surgery and other biological waste that no one was going to get near. We stored patient’s street clothes and gave them hospital clothes that clearly identified them as a patient so it was almost impossible to go AWOPYB – Absent without Paying Your Bill.

3. Make it Hard to Steal – We were one of the first mission hospitals to computerize in the late eighties. Not only did computers prevent math errors in calculating patient bills, but they kept medicine/supply costs updated and provided valuable management information. They made it very difficult to falsify receipts. We had a high fence around the hospital and guards at our gates. Bags and containers that visitors carried in were stored at the visitors’ entrance or inspected upon going in and out. We limited access to central supply, warehouses, the laundry and other places where valuable equipment, supplies and meds were stored.
4. Accountability – We instituted inventory systems and held people accountable for the things they were entrusted with. We put inventory numbers on equipment and checked that they were present. We did spot checks to make sure medicines and supplies requisitioned were used as intended. We had an outside audit of the hospital’s funds. We posted signs asking patients to inform senior management if their receipts or bills were inaccurate. We had money handled and counted by at least two people.
5. Rewards and Recognition – We taught and inspired honesty and rewarded departments and individuals that excelled in their internal audits and prevented theft. This recruited staff to work with us to prevent theft and recognized top performers.
6. Consequences – A pattern had been learned by employees that if they stole and got caught, the penalty would be that they would be fired. That inoculated the thinking into steal as much as you can and if you get caught just go home and enjoy your ill-gotten gains.

To reverse this we adopted the philosophy like stores that put up signs saying, “Shoplifters Will Be Prosecuted.” We informed our staff and the public that they would be arrested and prosecuted if they were caught stealing. We then followed through on our warning when theft was detected.

The first case was a head clerk in the business office that was falsifying receipts. His scheme was exposed when a patient brought back a receipt after partial payment of a bill and it did not match the carbon copy in the receipt book. Our investigation revealed he had stolen the equivalent of 15 years of salary and probably more than that. We reported it to the police and they arrested him. The case dragged on for almost a year.

Finally he was sentenced to one month in prison for the 15 counts of theft we could get patients to register complaints about. I thought it should have been much more, but still it had the desired effect. It deterred theft.

7. Consistency – Good systems with checks and balance are useless if you aren’t consistent in assuring they continue to operate. You also have to lay out the

consequences for mistakes or intentional theft and then take action when things happen.

8. Persistence – People will think up new ways to purloin. Their felt necessity is the mother of their invention. You have to continually adapt to changing threats.

Sometimes, things will not go well. The cook that stole was caught red handed by the police with our marked burlap bag full of beans in his house and was arrested. But we had a corrupt judicial system. A family member bribed the judge who not only declared him innocent but demanded that we hire him back to his former position. Despite that setback, we continued to persist not only by appealing his case but by still following through on all of our policies and procedures.

9. Get Everyone Involved – You don't want this to appear that the missionaries are the only ones involved in security. Both national and missionary leadership must present a united front. Security issues should be discussed by management staff and they must be involved in setting up the system and enforcing it.
10. Exhibit Grace and Forgiveness – You may ask, "But what will people think of you as a Christian and missionary? Won't you hurt your efforts in evangelism and discipleship?" The Bible teaches we must love the sinner but if we are in a place of authority, punish the sin.

I remember coming down the rutted dirt road to Tenwek on a trip back from a business meeting and spotting the young man, who had been in prison for 15-months, walking down the road. He had been put behind bars in a distant facility and I had been unable to visit him but had prayed for him regularly. I stopped and picked him up and asked how he was doing. I told him I was very sorry for the effect his imprisonment had on him and his family but we couldn't let a crime go unreported.

He turned to me and said, "Dr. Stevens, I want to thank you for putting me in prison." I'm sure my jaw must have fallen open.

He went on, "I've was in despair when I was first put in my cell. I thought about killing myself. I had disgraced myself and my family. My wife was pregnant. But God brought a local pastor who had volunteered as a chaplain. I knew about Christ and even could talk the language of a Christian, but when I hit bottom in that prison, I realized I needed Christ as my Savior and Lord. That chaplain led me to Christ and I accepted him into my life on my knees in that cell.

Then I grew in Christ. I had lots of time to study His word! Within a month or two I was sharing the gospel regularly with other prisoners and became the chaplain's unofficial assistant. I probably would never have come to Christ if I hadn't gone to prison!"

I found out he couldn't find a job because of his prison record so I hired him back to work for the hospital. Of course, I didn't put him back in the business office. He

joyfully mowed lawns and on his tea break I would find him in the chapel sharing his testimony with patients.

Show love and when appropriate grace. God can use even difficult circumstances to accomplish his plans.

Maybe you don't have security problems where you work. If so, praise the Lord and pray for those that do. If you do, these principles served me well. I hope they do the same for you.

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### **Cura Animarum**

by Rev. Stan Key

A picture is worth a thousand words. One of the best pictures of entire sanctification I have ever read comes from a little book entitled *Embracing Brokenness* (NavPress. 2002) by Alan E. Nelson. The author likens the inner self (the soul) to an untamed stallion. A stallion who has not been broken, may be wild and even beautiful. But until his will is conquered, he is of little worth to his master or to others. So it is with the soul.

*I once believed that when a person had a personal experience with God, all that was left was to learn more and "grow in grace." However, I continue to discover, often painfully, that there is a silent, but common and active process in the building of the Christian called brokenness...*

*The soul of a person, in its early and natural state, is wildly undisciplined. Whether it aggressively rebels against God's harnessing like a bucking bronco, or passive-aggressively resists guiding like an old, stubborn mule, the human spirit resents the influence of God's Spirit.*

*I have noticed three parallels between breaking a horse and taming the soul. The first is that the world has little use for a wild, unbroken soul. An unbroken soul is primarily a consumer. It occupies space and carries on many of the functions of a broken soul; but it performs little good...*

*The second observation is that the breaking process ultimately strengthens the bond between the cowboy (owner, rider, caretaker) and the horse. Prior to being broken, all that exists is admiration from a distance, and the basic maintenance of life (feeding, watering). Once brokenness occurs, there is bonding and affection...*

*Third, one would think that the breaking process would sap the spirit, drive and energy of the horse. It does not. The horse is just as strong after breaking as before, but his abilities multiply many times over and his energy is no longer wild, but directed. The process of embracing brokenness is not a matter of becoming passive, unmotivated or*

*lackluster. Rather, it is a catalyzing process that ultimately helps the soul reach its potential. (pages 18-19).*

Any wild stallions today? Jesus Christ invites you into the Holy Spirit corral where He intends to establish who is master... and who is not. The breaking process may not be pleasant but from personal experience let me testify, there is no other way to live a life that matters!

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### **Announcements**

#### Handbook for International Rotations

It is time to update our Handbook for International Rotations. If your place of service welcomes medical students, dental students, and / or dentists and residents I hope you will take the 5 minutes required to go to the survey site and update your info or give it initially if you are not in the current handbook. We will be sending the Invitation to everyone who receives this e-Pistle. We realize there will be more than 1 person receiving it at some locations but we are willing to filter out duplicate responses just to be sure everyone gets their information entered. Honestly, we've made the survey as simple as possible. You will be able to complete it without going to find information. So if you will do it as soon as you open it, it will not have to go on your already too long 'to do' list.

#### Where to Serve Webpage

Do you know someone who might be interested in filling a hole in medical missions? We maintain a page on the website called, "Where to Serve" on which we list adverts for organizations that have personnel needs. We know that some positions have been filled after finding the need on this page. Would you make your friends and colleagues aware of this resource? [Click here.](#)

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### **Digital Distractions**

by Dr. Ron Koteskey

During the last century changes in technology have brought about profound changes in how most people in the world live. During the last half century the digital revolution has changed how people relate, even in their marriages.

#### **Two Millennia Ago**

When Paul and Barnabas first served as cross-cultural missionaries, people had a more limited number of ways to communicate as mentioned in Acts 15.

- They could go in person and talk face to face so that both verbal and nonverbal cues were available (Acts 15: 4).
- They could tell another individual who would then go and repeat what was to be communicated (Acts 15:2). Adding that middle person could result in the message being changed.
- They could write a letter for someone to carry to the recipients (Acts 15:20). This meant that no additional clarification could help remove misunderstandings.

Most of the New Testament epistles are letters written to relatively young national churches or missionary pastors of these churches. These letters were written by veteran missionaries or church leaders at headquarters in Jerusalem. The letters include advice, warnings, and greetings to individuals at the church plants.

### **Two Centuries Ago**

Little had changed when William and Dorothy Carey went to India as missionaries in the late 18th century. They still traveled on foot, on horseback, and by sailing ship. They communicated in person, by sending oral messages via a third person, and by writing letters.

However, in the 19th century changes occurred when people invented the telegraph, the telephone, and the radio.

- Letters of the alphabet could be coded into dots and dashes, sent great distances via electrical impulses over lines, and decoded at the other end with the telegraph.
- Voices could be coded into electrical impulses, transmitted over lines, and transformed back into voice-like sounds with the telephone.
- Voices could be coded into electromagnetic radiation, sent through the air, and transformed back into voice-like sounds at the other end with radio.

No longer did people have to be actually present, send an oral messenger, or write a letter to communicate.

### **Today**

At the beginning of the 21st century with the digital revolution we have many additional ways of communicating, and these may become issues in marriages. During the last half of the 20th century with the development of the computer, information could be digitally coded so that it was readily available. This brought about huge changes in communication and entertainment readily available to missionaries all over the world. New means are continually being developed, but here are some available at the time of writing.

- Cell phones
- Email
- Skype
- Facebook and MySpace

- Blogs and YouTube
- Internet
- Chatrooms and instant messaging.
- Satellite TV and Radio, Podcasts
- DVDs, personal viewers, and iPods
- Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs)

Missionaries find the above extremely valuable. They can find needed information at the click of a mouse, reach group decisions without traveling thousands of miles, stay in touch with family and friends and so forth. No one wants to go back to more primitive methods. However, these may distract from more important things, such as your marriage.

### **General Issues**

These inventions have raised concerns in many areas, such as transportation and business. The digital revolution has greatly improved transportation, but it has also played a part in train, plane, and automobile accidents. It has revolutionized some things in business, but it has also sometimes resulted in lower creativity and productivity.

- **Multitasking.** At the end of the twentieth century people said the new generation could multitask, could listen to the TV, talk on the phone, and study—all at the same time. Psychologists have long maintained that people can attend to only one thing at a time. Recent research shows that when people “multitask,” they just rapidly shift their attention from one thing to another rather than doing more than one thing at a time.
- **Interruptions.** When people stop to answer a phone or read an email, the interruption is much more than the few seconds to listen or read. It is usually 10-15 minutes before they can refocus and proceed on their original task.
- **Boundaries.** Before this revolution, when one went home, other relationships and tasks were left behind. However, with a digital device in one’s pocket, that boundary is no longer in place. Anyone with your number or address can reach you at any time you have it on.
- **Time.** Work and entertainment can also be carried into your home in your pocket. This may mean time taken from your family or time you spend with God himself. As such, it is an issue of the stewardship of time.

### **Specific Marriage Examples**

Of course, here we are not as concerned about national security as we are about marriage relationships. Here are some issues that can arise.

- **Relationship with spouse.** Your spouse may begin to feel like he or she is not very high on your list of priorities and come to resent your digital devices.
- **Relationships with colleagues.** If one partner becomes overly attached to digital activity, the couple may not interact with other expats in their agency or in their city.
- **Lose real contact.** A person enmeshed with digital distractions may not recognize problems, not know that anything is wrong until too late.

- Giving impressions. Checking a cell phone to see who is calling or reading text messages may give the impression that people are not giving their full attention.
- Sexual fantasy. Even if one is never caught viewing pornography on the Internet, such activity still results in another fantasized person in the marital bed.

A February 2009 article in Newsweek is titled, “Will the Blackberry sink the Presidency?” Stopping to spend 15 minutes with your Blackberry may not sink your marriage, but it may cause your spouse to question your relationship to him or her.

### **What can be done?**

Though problems may arise through digital distractions, here are suggestions to minimize the likelihood.

- Discuss these issues with your spouse and agree on steps you can take to prevent problems.
- Schedule daily time with your spouse.
- Turn off your cell phone or PDA before arriving at home to set a boundary and prevent interruptions.
- Check email and voice mail only at agreed on times, such as four times a day or not more than once every three hours, when with your spouse.
- Take steps to avoid pornography on the Internet, and have specific planned steps to escape it when it appears.
- Set a limit on how much time you spend each day on Facebook or other social networks.
- Limit how much time you spend watching DVDs and playing electronic games.
- Tell your colleagues the times you will be available (“on call”), and turn your digital device off at other times.

All of these suggestions are specific steps people can take to set priorities in the stewardship of time. Remember that all—rich and poor, old and young—get the same 24 hours in every day. How they use that time depends on their priorities.

For a more complete treatment of this topic as well as other topics please visit [www.missionarycare.com](http://www.missionarycare.com). Also please let your non-medical colleagues know about these free resources.

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