

Global Medical Libraries

By Valerie Walker, GML Founder

I am the founder of Global Medical Libraries (GML). Its goal is to improve global healthcare through education one book at a time. GML's objective is to significantly enhance the initial and continuing medical education of healthcare professionals in communities crippled by the lack of materials with which to teach, learn and provide healthcare of all kinds, through donated medical education resources.

Since the program's inception in April 2007, over \$2.5 million of health sciences textbooks (of dentistry, nursing, medicine and public health) have been donated to 36 countries spread over 5 continents, at no expense to the recipients or their governments. The countries include Afghanistan, Angola, Antigua, Bosnia, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Guyana, Haiti, Kenya, Iraq, Madagascar, Malawi, Morocco-Western Sahara region, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, Republic of Fiji, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, South Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey (Turkish Syrian Border), Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

What follows, in their own words, are reflections of people who have been involved at every step of the process to deliver donated texts. In addition to my comments, we will hear from Colonel Laura Pacha, MD, the Army doctor who wrote the email to get the program started; Major Christopher Conner, PhD, U.S. Army, an embassy point-of-contact; two recipients, Valeria Mrema and Patricia Ekuba

Odoi-Atsem; and a donor, Dr. Kathleen Broussard.

From Valerie Walker: "As the Director of the UCLA Medical Alumni Association (2006-2016), I had many truly interesting alumni relations experiences. Not one of them trumps this medical book project. Global Medical Libraries (GML) has outlived my tenure at UCLA. What started out as a 'one and done' project continues to make an impact 17 years later. God certainly had a different idea. He continues to anoint and bless this book project. It is my passion!

The genesis of the book project, which was originally called Books without Border, was when I received an email on April 4, 2007, from UCLA alumna Major Laura Pacha, MD'93 (she is now a colonel). Dr. Pacha was the Preventive Medicine Officer for the 25th Infantry Division and for Multinational Division North in Iraq. The email was brief, simply requesting medical books for her Iraqi medical colleagues.

Two tons of books were turned over to the UCLA Army ROTC at a press conference in September 2007. I'm so grateful for the unwavering support of the Medical Alumni Board and the Army ROTC.

The name of the project has changed three times, but its goal has always remained the same: improve global healthcare through education one book at a time. Recognizing that developing countries don't have the same educational resources as first-world countries, Global Medical Libraries significantly enhances the initial and continuing medical education of healthcare professionals in communities crippled by the lack of materials, with which to teach, learn and provide healthcare of all kinds, through donated medical education resources.

To ensure that no book donations find their way onto the black market, GML donors send their books directly to the US Embassy in the host country or to a vetted American who is willing to absorb secondary shipping costs to get the books to their institution. Such is the case currently with the Cameroon and Ghana recipients.”

From Colonel Laura Pacha, MD: “To be honest, I had no idea how expansive this effort would become. Attending conferences with the local doctors, I learned how challenged they were to keep up with current medical practice and techniques. The generators would run for only so long, impacting their ability to use computers and the internet, or even to review content on CDs/DVDs.

So I reached out to my medical school, thinking we might end up with a box or two of books and maybe some current journals. Little did I know that I had unleashed Valerie’s energy and the generosity of the UCLA Bruin spirit!! Our logistics officer was shocked to hear there were two tons of books and literature in LA waiting for shipment to our base! But he was able to harness the support of an amazing team that got it done. The shipment eventually found its way to the Provincial Reconstruction Team at (Camp) Speicher and was distributed to physicians, hospitals and medical schools across Iraq.

That my little email question has turned into this venture that lives on nearly 20 years later is just astounding to me. I am so amazed at all that Valerie and generous supporters like yourself have accomplished.”

Major Christopher Conner, PhD, U.S. Army, now assigned in SDO/DATT (Senior Defense Official/Defense Attaché) at the US Embassy in Bujumbura, Burundi, also participated in GML during his post at the



US Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. “The donation of books directly impacts the medical professionals in Burundi and Ethiopia. When newer books are

donated the knowledge and capabilities of the local doctors increase. They are also able to conduct research and reach back to hard sources that they would otherwise have no access to.

This ability to conduct independent research with up-to-date literature and on current topics enables the doctors to accurately and quickly identify lifesaving procedures that can save children and adults.



Without this up-to-date literature the doctors that treat the poorest and most disenfranchised sections of the Burundian and Ethiopian society

would be even more limited in their abilities to diagnose and learn new techniques and procedures that impact lives on a daily basis.”

GML has greatly impacted Zawadi Memorial Health Training Institute

(ZMHTI) in the Moshi Region of Tanzania. **Valeria Mrema, the founder of ZMHTI** put in her gratitude into words:

"The educational resources we received from GML assisted us in acquiring the registration (accreditation) from the Government because among the criteria for the Institute to be registered is to have a library which is equipped with the core books and reference books for the program.

Fortunately, ZMHTI received 50 boxes with 158 books. I'm grateful for all the work donors and GML has done to support us."

Another grateful recipient is Medix Health College in Ghana. Ninety-five percent of Medix Health College library collection is the courtesy of generous GML donors.

From Patricia Ekuba Odoi-Atsem, MHA, MBA, PhD, CEO of 3M&C Ghana Limited - 3M&C Health Systems: "Medix Health College located in Accra, Ghana, owes its biggest thanks to Global Medical Libraries for heeding their call to donate healthcare educational books to our library. In less than a year we have received more than 3,500 medical and nursing educational materials. We at Medix are ever so thankful."

The donors, primarily physicians and nurses, are the lifeblood of the project. I am eternally grateful for those who are willing to spend their own money to send books to individuals that they will never meet.

One current donor is **Dr. Kathleen Broussard** from the Health Resource Center Learning Coordinator at Penn Valley Learning Center, Metropolitan Community College, Kansas City, MO. She wanted to share her thoughts about GML.

"There are organizations that will take

donations of pretty much any book, but I have been searching for an appropriate recipient of our health-related materials. Through GML, I have found new international friends who will truly appreciate and honor our materials while using them to help make the world a healthier place!"

For the most current information on donating books, visit <https://globalmedicallibraries.org/donate-books>. For more information or questions, contact Valerie at info@globalmedicallibraries.org.

Watch Your Step!

By Alan Werblin

In my backyard I have a koi pond. Two of the inhabitants are red ear slider



semi-aquatic turtles. I bought both of them from Petco when they were the size of a computer mouse. Twenty years later, they are the size of a football. The larger of the two we call Mr. T. He loves to wander.

He has explored the whole yard and more recently has ventured into my neighbor Bill's yard, where he has enjoyed the jacuzzi and the swimming pool.

The last time Bill called to inform me that he had an unwanted reptilian guest enjoying his pool, my grandkids, DeMiyah and DJ, 7 and 8 ½, were visiting. My wife Tina and the two grandkids accompanied me to rescue Mr. T. On the way through Bill's gate my