

2025-2026 Update From Dr. Roger Härtl

Advancing Global Neurosurgery: A Year of Historic Achievements

Our team has been going to Tanzania since 2008, first to deliver equipment and supplies and later, as we learned more about what is most effective, to bring expertise. Having learned that capacity building is the best way of improving ongoing care, we instituted a formal training course in 2014. Every year since then, we have assembled a Western-trained team of experts to collaborate with our colleagues in Tanzania.

I cannot tell you how gratifying it was this year to witness the extraordinary achievements at our 11th Annual Global Neurosurgery Course. For the first time, Tanzanian surgeons used 3D navigated during a brain tumor resection, completed their first minimally invasive TLIF procedure, and utilized neuromonitoring in complex cervical spine surgery. These weren't just technical milestones—they represent sustainable advances in care that will benefit patients throughout East Africa for generations to come.

This year also brought new depth to our partnership through the August visit of a delegation from the Muhimbili Orthopaedic Institute to Weill Cornell Medicine. Dr. Mpoki Ulisubisya, Dr. Hamisi Shabani and Dr. Anthony Assey spent an intensive week meeting with our leadership, touring our facilities, and exploring how we can develop a comprehensive spine center in Tanzania modeled after Och Spine. The exchange of ideas and expertise during this visit has opened exciting new pathways for collaboration.

Our research continues to shed light on critical challenges in global neurosurgery. Two important papers published this year examined access to neurosurgical literature in Tanzania and follow-up care for traumatic spinal injuries, highlighting areas where systemic improvements are urgently needed.



I am deeply grateful to our industry partners—Brainlab, Globus Medical, Cadwell, Viseon, Realist and DePuy Synthes—whose generous donations of equipment and technical expertise make these innovations possible.

I also want to thank our recently graduated Global Neurosurgery Fellow, Dr. Marta Garvayo, for her exceptional work organizing this year's course and advancing our mission throughout the year.

As we expand our work in Tanzania, we continue to look for ways to strengthen and improve the program. The dedication of our fellows, the commitment of our Tanzanian colleagues, and the support of donors like you give me tremendous hope for the future.

Thank you all for your continued interest and support of this project, which has meant so much to me over the last 17 years. Your support makes all of this possible, and I am deeply grateful.



Roger Härtl, MD

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Strengthening Partnerships: Tanzanian Delegation Visits Weill Cornell Medicine

In August 2025, Weill Cornell Medicine hosted a distinguished delegation from the Muhimbili Orthopaedic Institute in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Led by Dr. Mpoki Ulisubisya (CEO), Dr. Hamisi Shabani (Professor of Neurosurgery), and Dr. Anthony Assey (Director of Orthopaedics and Trauma), the visit aimed to strengthen our partnership while exploring pathways to develop a comprehensive spine center modeled after Och Spine at NewYork-Presbyterian.

Throughout the week, the delegation engaged with leaders across Weill Cornell Medicine and NewYork-Presbyterian to gain insights into patient care, research, and hospital operations.

Kojo Oduro provided an in-depth look at central sterile processing, while Arianna Dinelli and advanced practice providers toured the Och Spine recovery unit on 2North.

Dr. Ibrahim Hussain shared clinical perspectives from the operating room, and research fellows discussed ongoing spine research initiatives.

The group also met with senior leadership, including Dr. Philip Stieg, who spoke on neurosurgical department leadership, and Paul Dunphey and Matthew Bair, who outlined organizational strategies to deliver high-quality care.

Drs. Neel Mehta, Jaspal Ricky Singh, and Zeeshan Sardar highlighted multidisciplinary and multicampus approaches to spine care. Additional discussions included updates in epilepsy surgery and neurocritical care with Dr. Caitlin Hoffman and reflections on the origin and future of the collaboration with Drs. Estomih Mtui and Michael Stewart.



The visit reinforced a shared commitment to advancing neurosurgical care through collaboration and education, providing a strong foundation for future initiatives aimed at improving patient outcomes in Tanzania and the broader East African region.

Learn more at
tanzanianeurosurgery.org

New Global Neurosurgery Fellow: Dr. Elochukwu Ibekwe

Our in-country global fellowship program is one of our most valuable projects in Tanzania. For nine years we have sent Western-trained neurosurgeons to work alongside local providers, bridging the distance and advancing our training, research, and educational projects. We have been truly impressed by the dedication of these fellows, who give their all to the program.

This year our Global Neurosurgery Fellow is a neurology trained, neurointensivist focused on improving care in the ICU and postoperative units. We also welcomed back Dr. Beverly Cheserem (2019-2020), now a neurosurgeon at Aga Khan University Hospital in Nairobi, Kenya, who participated as faculty in this year's course. It is gratifying to know that our fellows maintain their passion not only for this project, but for the broader issues in global neurosurgery.



Recognition for Excellence in Global Neurosurgery

In recognition of his outstanding work in global neurosurgery, Dr. Härtl was awarded the prestigious MOI Humanitarian Award at the 11th Global Neurosurgery Course in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. The award honored Dr. Härtl's outstanding mentorship, enduring support, and dedication to advancing neurosurgery at the Muhimbili Orthopaedic Institute (MOI).

Dr. Härtl founded the Weill Cornell Medicine Tanzania Neurosurgery Project in 2008, a pioneering initiative to enhance neurosurgical education, training, and patient care in Tanzania. Over the past 17 years, this program has grown into a transformative model for global neurosurgery collaborations. Originally focusing on Bugando Hospital in northern Tanzania, the initiative has since expanded to Muhimbili Orthopaedic and Neurosurgery Institute in Dar Es Salaam, reinforcing its commitment to improving neurosurgical outcomes in the region.

Through this initiative, Dr. Härtl and his team provide hands-on training to Tanzanian neurosurgeons, enabling them to perform essential procedures with locally available resources.

The program also includes an observational fellowship at Weill Cornell Medicine, where promising surgeons gain firsthand experience in high-level neurosurgical care.

Additionally, annual neurosurgery meetings in East Africa, virtual and in-person training courses, and regular case discussions via conference calls ensure sustained mentorship and skill-building for Tanzanian neurosurgical teams.

"Receiving the MOI Humanitarian Award is a tremendous honor," Dr. Härtl said. "This recognition underscores the commitment of many who have worked tirelessly to improve neurosurgical education and care in Tanzania. I sincerely thank Dr. Mpoki Ulisubisya, Executive Director of MOI, and my esteemed colleagues Dr. Hamisi Shabani and Dr. Laurent Lemerle Mchome for their invaluable contributions to this initiative."



Keep up with our work by visiting us on Facebook or at neurosurgery.weillcornell.org/tanzania

Highlights of Our 2025 Global Neurosurgery Course

We welcomed new faculty including Dr. Sheeraz Qureshi (Hospital for Special Surgery), Dr. Naikhoba Munabi (Columbia University), Dr. Richard Assaker (Roger Salengro Teaching Hospital) and Dr. Sara Nguyen (University of Utah) and experts from institutions across North America, Europe, and Africa.

Long-term faculty members Dr. Caitlin Hoffman (Weill Cornell Medicine), Dr. Halinder Mangat (Kansas City University), Dr. Christopher Bonfield (Vanderbilt University), Dr. Julie Woodfield (University of Edinburgh) and Dr. Beverly Cheserem (Aga Khan University Hospital, Kenya) continued their invaluable contributions.

Local faculty including Dr. Hamisi Shabani, Dr. Zarina Shabhay, and Dr. Laurent Lemer. Dr. Nicephorus Rutabasibwa, Dr. Alpha Kinghomella, Dr. Aingaya Kaale and Dr. Othman Wanin provided essential leadership and expertise.

Research Advancing Global Health Equity

New studies led by Dr. Roger Härtl shed light on critical gaps in access to neurosurgical literature and patient follow-up care in Tanzania. This work highlights the need for systemic improvements in global health equity.

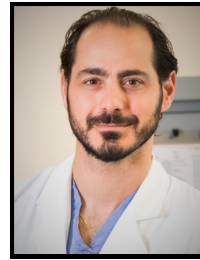
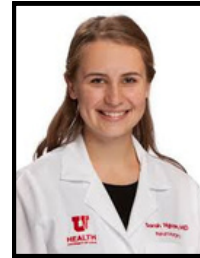
Research on Neurosurgical Literature Access in Tanzania

In a paper published in *Neurosurgery*, Dr. Härtl, Dr. Sabas, and coauthors investigated whether Tanzanian neurosurgeons can access the academic research that directly informs their clinical practice.

The team found that while 62% of Tanzanian neurosurgical literature is available through open-access sources, 9% remains entirely inaccessible to the country's neurosurgeons. The study calls for increased support for open-access publishing and initiatives that ensure physicians in low-resource settings can benefit from the scientific knowledge their colleagues help produce.

Study on Traumatic Spinal Injury Follow-up Care

A second study, published in *BMJ Open*, examined follow-up care among patients treated for traumatic spinal injuries at a major medical center in Tanzania. Dr. Härtl, Dr. Ikwuegbuanyi and co-authors found that fewer than one in eight patients returned for follow-up at one year post-injury. Predictors of follow-up included having private insurance, the nature of the initial injury, and signs of neurological improvement. The findings point to the urgent need for targeted strategies to improve long-term patient engagement and outcomes in low-resource environments.



We extend deep gratitude to our commercial supporters:

- Brainlab for navigation system donation
- Globus Medical for implant donations
- Cadwell for neuromonitoring equipment
- Vison for the MaxView tubular imaging system
- Realist for training models
- DePuy Synthes for ongoing implant support
- UpSurgeOn for cranial training modules
- Kusum Pharm and Decima HealthPoint for their continued partnership

The Global Neurosurgery Course, a cornerstone of the Weill Cornell Tanzania Neurosurgery Project, continues to exemplify Weill Cornell Medicine's commitment to expanding access to high-quality neurosurgical care worldwide. Through partnerships like these, Weill Cornell Medicine continues to demonstrate that excellence in neurosurgical care transcends borders, creating lasting impact through education, collaboration, and shared expertise.

Support Global Neurosurgery

Join us in advancing neurosurgical education and patient care in Tanzania. Learn how you can contribute at neurosurgery.weillcornell.org/tanzania