



MUST

VOLUME 13

SPECIAL EDITION



In this Edition

**Ophthalmological
Titans give
back to the
community**

- Mentors take the lead
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- What the Residents say &
 - Sight Restored: 18 patients receive life-changing cornea transplants



COMMUNICATIONS CREW

Dear readers, I am pleased to bring you this special edition about MUST and Harvard Medical School joining hands to support patients with optical challenges. This initiative, focused on enhancing eye care in our region, embodies the very essence of MUST's vision: to be a "centre of Academic and Professional Excellence in Science and Technology." It further underscores our unwavering commitment to the University's mandate of promoting quality education that serves national development.

The collaboration brought a distinguished team of ophthalmologists from Harvard, whose expertise focused on critical areas like oculoplastic surgery, retina, corneal transplant, orbit, and lacrimal disorders. Their presence not only provided much-needed surgical care to patients in these specialized fields, but also served as an invaluable mentorship opportunity for our residents. Witnessing the Harvard team's approach and techniques firsthand will undoubtedly elevate the skills and knowledge of our future ophthalmologists. We were deeply touched by the stories of patients who received life-changing care we will share the experiences of patients and residents, Together, through partnerships like this one, we can truly impact lives. We can illuminate not just the physical world through improved vision, but also the future of healthcare in our region.

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Mbarara University of Science and Technology,(MUST) in the department of ophthalmology hosted a team from the Harvard Medical School (HMS) for a one week medical camp. The camp focused on: surgeries, mentorship and Lectures in the different fields of ophthalmology. Leading the Harvard Medical School team was Dr. Suzanne Freitag a woman whose corneas glittered with the wisdom of countless successful transplants. Dr. Suzanne K. Freitag is a highly respected and accomplished ophthalmologist specializing in oculoplastic surgery, orbit and lacrimal disorders. She is currently the Director of the Ophthalmic Plastic Surgery Service and Co-Director of the Center for Thyroid Eye Disease and Orbital Surgery at Massachusetts Eye and Ear, a world-renowned ophthalmology center affiliated to Harvard Medical School

She is actively involved in research, having published over 150 peer-reviewed articles and authored four textbooks. She is also the Editor-in-Chief of "Orbit," a prestigious journal focused on orbital disorders and oculoplastic surgery.



Dr. Suzzane on table for probing and syringing of the left tear ducts following a left watering eye.



Recognition and awards: Dr. Freitag's expertise and dedication have been recognized by numerous awards, including the American Academy of Ophthalmology Achievement Award and the American Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery's Richard C. Dortzbach Award for Research Excellence. There was no better person to lead the team than Dr. Suzanne The Ugandan team was led by Dr. John Onyango, Head of Department ophthalmology, MUST. He is senior Lecturer in the department, a respected figure in the field of ophthalmology with expertise in several areas particularly:

Pediatric ophthalmology: Dr. Onyango has a special interest in treating eye diseases in children, including cataracts, strabismus (misaligned eyes), and glaucoma. He completed a fellowship in Pediatric ophthalmology and strabismus at CCBRT in Tanzania. He is a senior researcher.



Dr. Onyango doing a brow suspension following congenital ptosis of the left eye in a 2 year old child.

The other experts included:

- Pineda Roberto Retina specialist
- Dr. Carolina Chiou (Corneal Transplant) fellow
- Tarjani Dave oculoplastic surgeon
- Amy Yvan Retina Specialist
- Palmer Feibelman Resident and photographer

Local Participants:

- Dr. John Onyango, Head of Department, MUST
- Dr. Sam Ruvuma, Retina Consultant, MUST
- Assoc. Prof. Amos Twinamasiko, Oculoplastic Surgeon, MUST
- Drs. Simon Arunga and Abel Ebong, cornea specialist
- Residents of ophthalmology , MUST



Assoc. Prof. Amos Twinamasiko



Dr. Simon Arunga



Dr. Sam Ruvuma



Dr. John Onyango

Beyond Borders, Beyond Limits:

A Week of Inspiration and Collaboration at Ophthalmology Department



Dr. Abel performs an Incision and curettage procedure. The week unfolded as mentors and mentees embarked on enhancing skills. This began with screening of patients to be worked upon in the camp. According to the HoD Dr. Onyango John, these were selected based on the advancement of the problem, therefore having priority cases for consideration. The days always began with lectures in relation to the cases to be handled in the day,

screening of the patients, review of previous patients and theater. The evenings were always about the planning for the next day and discussion of cases of the day.

Dr. Onyango said that the camp was handled at the ophthalmology clinic at MUST and the partnering training center at Ruharo Mission hospital. He added that the camp was in time for a number of patients due to the gravity of their problems, notwithstanding the affordabil-

ity of the surgeries. “ We had over 200 patients with pending cases of surgery, these included cornea transplants, plastic surgery and other ophthalmic cases. As a country, we don't have a cornea bank. All the cases handled during the camp were to receive Cornea from the US”. He added that an average cornea transplant would cost about 10 million Ugandan shillings, which is a lot for many Ugandans



The different specialists in the theatre

Dr. Onyango expressed his gratitude to Harvard. He said this was a testament to the transformative power of shared knowledge, a bridge built upon empathy and a collective desire to illuminate the world, he thanked them for leaving behind a legacy of mentorship, skills transfer, and improved sight and a community forever grateful for the light they brought. He pointed out that for the further HMS and MUST to embark on collaborative research in relation to clinical improvement and patient Management.

Transformative Week of Mentorship and Shining a Light on Hope:

Importance of HMS Visits:

Dr. John Onyango, Head of Department at MUST, emphasized the immense value of the annual HMS visit. These visits ensure MUST stays updated on the latest advancements in ophthalmology. They also equip residents with the necessary skills to deliver high-quality eye care to the Ugandan community.

Dr. Onyango highlighted the overwhelming number of patients this year. Movement restrictions due to the pandemic limited HMS visits in the past. Even with the program resuming in 2021, the demand for care remained high.

The HMS team successfully performed 18 cornea transplants and 32 plastic surgeries, making a significant impact on the Ugandan community.

Knowledge Sharing and Inspiration: Dr. Suzzane expressed the immense satisfaction gained from sharing knowledge and expertise with the talented MUST team. Their dedication and passion for improving eye care in Uganda were truly inspiring.

According to Associate Professor. Amos Twinamastiko, this initiative exemplifies the vital role of knowledge exchange in improving healthcare in resource-limited settings and paves the way for a brighter future for ophthalmic care in our community



Improved Skills and Knowledge: What the residents said

The program resulted in significant improvement in the residents' practical skills and theoretical understanding of corneal transplants, oculoplastic surgery, and retina care. Faculty members also benefited by gaining new insights and updating their knowledge in these subspecialties

Dr. Twinomujuni A.W , a year I resident at MUST: "This camp has been a game-changer for me. I feel more confident in my abilities and excited to apply the new knowledge I've gained to help patients in need."



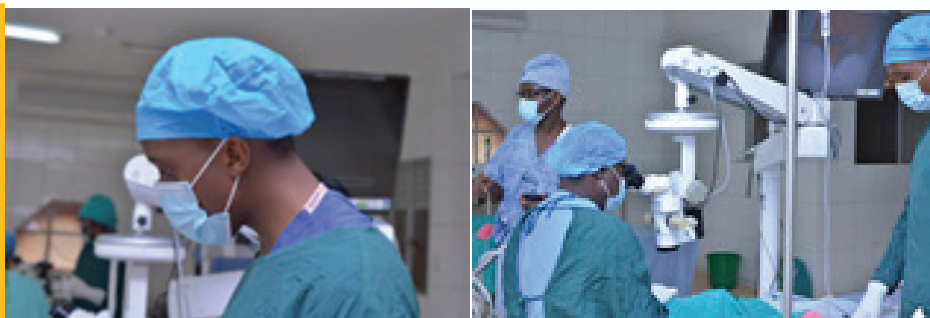
L-R Dr. Twinomujuni assisting in excisional biopsy of an orbital mass of the left eye

Dr. Aboke Brenda a year II resident, the camp improved on my surgical skills, clinical examinations and management of patients with corneal ulcers and their follow up.



Dr. Aboke being guided on a cataract surgery

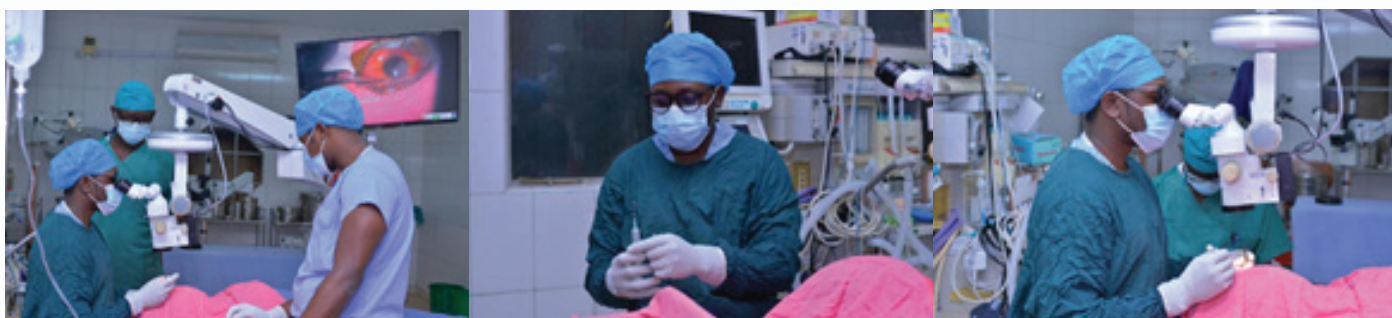
Dr. Nshuti. J, a year 1 Resident at MUST said “the camp improved on my general knowledge in ophthalmology including surgical skills and believe this will benefit the general population in eye health”



Dr. Nshuti. J assisting in a TRAB for congenital glaucoma by Dr. Onyango

Dr. Apap Jocef, a year III resident said” As a third year ophthalmology resident, the camp benefitted me in two ways mostly:

1. Surgical exposure: Getting to participate in a variety of surgeries which has helped improve my overall skills.
2. Professional development: Interacting and learning from the team from Harvard. Meeting the diverse team of specialists inspired me to work even harder to get to their level of expertise



Dr. Apap carrying out a hyphema washout. The patient was involved in an accident (blunt force trauma) and developed bleeding. The blood was collecting in the eye and obscuring vision. So the operation involved removing that blood to improve vision

The other seniors included Dr. Teddy Kwaga an ophthalmologist who said the camp majorly contributed in 3 areas as below:

Enhanced Diagnostic and Surgical Capabilities: Through exposure to advanced techniques and technologies, the MUST department is now better equipped to diagnose and treat complex ophthalmic conditions.

Technology Transfer: The Harvard team facilitated the transfer of advanced equipment and software to MUST, further enhancing the department's capabilities and patient care.

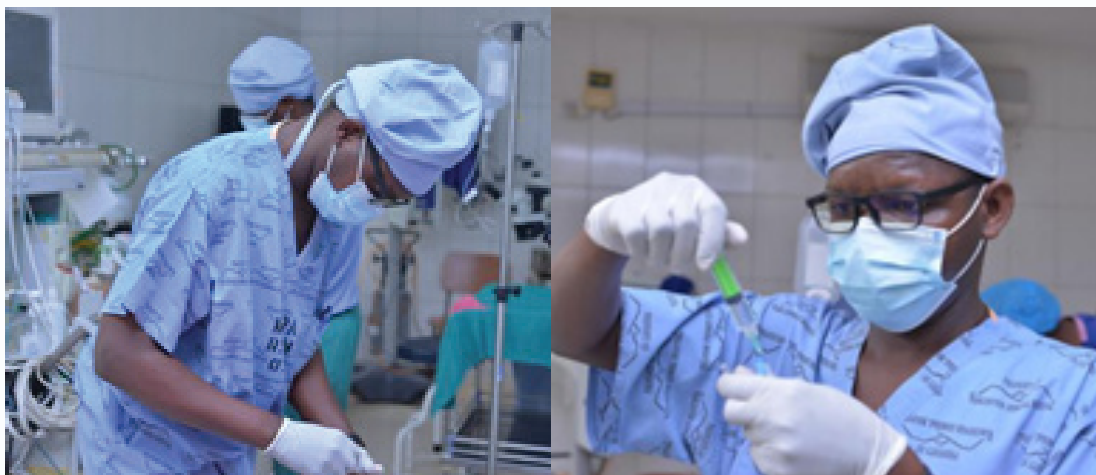
Strengthened Collaboration: The week-long camp fostered a strong sense of collaboration and partnership between MUST and Harvard, laying the foundation for future knowledge exchange and research opportunities.



The Unsung Hero: Dr. Jacob the anesthesiologist of the entire camp

Medical camps rely on strong teamwork. This camp highlighted Dr. Jacob Nawezo Gerald, the anesthesiologist, as a key player. He assessed patients before surgery, chose the right anesthesia, and monitored them closely during procedures. His work ensured patient comfort and safety throughout the camp. While surgeons are often recognized, Dr. Jacob's role as anesthesiologist was equally important, showcasing the true power of teamwork in successful medical care.





Respect: Dr. Jacob explaining to the patient the process she is going to under go with gratitude

From Mbarara to the World:

A Week of Ophthalmic Excellence with Harvard Medical School

In the ophthalmology clinic at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital,(MRRH) together with Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) We had an opportunity to speak to some of the patients who had surgery during the week of the ophthalmology camp.

Medical Disclaimer

The information presented in this document reflects the personal experiences of individual patients who had undergone surgery. It is important to understand that:

- Results may vary: Every individual's body and healing process is unique. While some patients may experience similar outcomes, there is no guarantee that your results will mirror those presented here.

- **Limited information:** These patient experiences are based on their personal recollection and may not capture the full scope of their pre- and post-operative journey. They are not substitutes for a detailed medical consultation.

- **Not medical advice:** This information is intended

for informational purposes only and should not be construed as medical advice. Always consult with a qualified healthcare professional to discuss your individual circumstances and treatment options.

- **Privacy protection:** While initials are used, it is possible that certain details could still identify individuals. Please exercise caution when sharing this information.

By proceeding to read this document, you acknowledge that you understand and accept these limitations.



Patient I R.T

R.T who had come for a second surgery of her left eye. With a friendly gesture, R.T agreed to share her unique journey, offering insights into the challenges and possible ways of living with unclear vision.



R.T shared her story with details as below:

On January 13, 2023 I was admitted at Ruharo missionary hospital in Mbarara. I had a successful surgery and I was discharged. I was told to come back for review after three weeks. The reviews went on and on and in April 2023 I was told that my eye had problem. This was so heartbreaking for me, I lost myself for a moment as the doctor was explaining

I was referred to MRRH for further management. Getting here, I met Dr. Abel who gave me hope that this was manageable. He immediately admitted me for proper management. He discharged me a month later and I was given medication that I have used till today. I was so low, asking myself why me, - to have a surgery gone bad?

Along this journey, I met a friend and a sister who carried me through with word of hope. Dr. Brenda found me at my lowest crying with so many questions in my head. She counseled me and gave me hope just like doctor Abel. She went an extra mile to pray with me and also shared her number so as to keep communicating any time I need to share my questions or when I needed a friend to talk. The doctors here are more than a gift. They go beyond medical care.

I was scared of this second surgery but with the support from the medical team here, I feel I am ready for it.



Question:

Do you think the doctors at Ruharo Messed you up, that is why the eye problem?

No, Not at all they did their best but it was me who did not follow their instructions after I was discharged. I over strained my eye thinking I had healed.

This time round I am ready to follow the instructions given to me, because I have tasted the pain of partial impairment, I need my proper sight which I am hopeful that I will regain after this surgery Ruth told us that she spent UGX1.5m on her first operation and is now going to pay UGX150,000 in the second operation. She told us that the doctors at MRRH told her about the camp, and the waiver on the cost of the surgery.

**Case II T.M 5 years old**

We spoke to the care taker who was the grandmother of the patient.

His story

He was pricked by a stick while he was playing. The eye bled and was swollen We immediately came to hospital. We were in time to save his eye. He had surgery yesterday he had a bit of pain last night but he is better now. We are waiting for the doctor.

The doctors treated us well they would explain to us the different possibilities after surgery. We are positive it will go well. I traveled with the father who has stepped out to get him something to eat. We have heard about surgeries and got scared of : the outcomes and the money. What we have paid cannot even buy a cow. In all we are grateful to the doctors and nurses for treating us with care, updating us as well as explaining to us everything, despite our lack of education. They would

take the trouble and explain to us in the local language and majority of them are not even from this area.

Case III N. M 4 years old

Interview with the mother

N.M was hit while he was playing at home, we rushed him to Ruharo hospital. We were referred to MRRH immediately. He was examined and started on treatment immediately. We were told that this was a traumatic cataract.

We were told to come for surgery in November 2023, however this did not take place the doctors told us they need to deal with "a quiet eye"we were given medicine to manage the swelling and told to come back on November 29 2023 .

This time round, the eye has developed pressure ranging from 45-48. The doctors then told us they needed to manage the pressure until it stabilize because it was affecting the nerves of the eye.

All the above were managed and my son stabilized. Yesterday he was taken to theatre, I was told they removed the damaged lenses and he got a lens transplant.

Case IV T.D Hyphema wash-out

I fell off a bicycle, I went to a health centre in Kabale that gave me pain killers but advised me to go for a check up with the optician. I had not lost my vision so I did not think it was necessary to go to the hospital. After a few days, I started seeing blurry visions, I went to Kabale Hospital, who later referred me here. I was told I needed surgery and that I needed to contribute 200,000 for the entire procedure.

I had not raised the money till today, I still had a small balance but the doctors agreed to work on me. I am positive that I will see again and I hope to get out of here with a full vision.



Case V

We were granted an opportunity to interview KR, a patient whose eye had held a story waiting to be unveiled.

KR had just gotten treatment from the ophthalmology clinic of Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital (MRRH) and Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) following the partnership with the Harvard Surgical Team.

After exchanging pleasantries, we explained the purpose of the interview. KR, understanding the significance of sharing her journey, consented with humility and sincerity. With the promise of confidentiality, we assured her that her story would provide inspiration and shed light on the incredible work carried out by the clinic's dedicated professionals. She shared her story as follows;

On November 11, 2023, I slept normally and woke up the next morning feeling my self having a grass like thing in my right eye. I thought it was a mere problem until the next morning when I touched my left eye to find out that the right could not see anything. I would only see a white thing in front of me.

This prompted me to go to Sebagoro B Hospital in Kikuube district, where they gave me eye drops. After approximately one and a half weeks, having noticed no change, I went back to the same hospital and this time round they wrote some drugs that I had to buy from a private clinic at UGX5000. These drugs took me for two weeks without noticing any change. I was hence advised by my friends and relatives to opt for herbalists which I did but all in vain. This made me wretched and hopeless. I knew I would never get my clear sight once again. I then decided to go for a serious treatment in a big hospital like MRRH and that is how I come here.

Upon reaching here on January 22, 2024, they welcomed me and took me in for tests, where they told me to read some letters and I couldn't read any. The doctor checked me again and told me I was to be operated the next day and so I paid UGX250,000 for that operation.

The operation went on well the next day which was Tuesday and I had enough rest up-to Wednesday (yesterday) when I was taken for the post surgery testing. This time round, I could read one of the letters and see some blurry images of people. There I knew there was some improvement and I got hopes of getting my sight again.

Right now, I can see more pictures of people, grounds outside, trees and others; though they are still blurry. The doctor said I can go home, I'm okay now. I am very happy for this and I know I am going to be fully recovered. I can't wait to be in my world again.



The theatre Nurses L-R Moise, Owembabazi Phiona

Case VI

Like KR, KB, understood the significance of sharing his journey and also consented with full sincerity, having explained to him the purpose of the interview. He shared his story as follows;

I kept on seeing un-clearly for some period, but did not take care until January 22nd 2024 when my right eye became totally sick and I decided to come to MRRH for serious treatment. I went directly to the doctor who tested and told me I was to go for a surgery. I hence got operated the next day which was Tuesday 23rd.

I had enough rest and on Wednesday, they removed the plasters and took me for visual testing. I only read the letters using the left eye that wasn't operated. They wrote me some medicine that I bought at UGX65000.

Question : *How have you been treated socially?* Here, all the people are jovial. They have told us to always share with our fellows and that we should not hesitate to ask for any help from anyone.

Question : *How much did you pay for the operation?* I paid UGX250000 for the operation but that is nothing compared to my eye.

Today on the 25th of January 2024, they have tested my blood pressure and I'm still waiting for the results and a letter that will tell me when to be back. I hope to be fine and my eye will heal since am in the right hands.



Sight Re-
stored: 18 pa-
tients received
life-changing
cornea trans-
plants



In a life-changing collaboration, a team from Harvard Medical School's Department of Ophthalmology traveled to Uganda for a one-week camp, offering a beacon of hope to 18 patients in need of cornea transplants. Partnering with Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) and Ruharo Eye Clinic, a team of specialists worked upon 18 patients, who underwent cornea transplants. This initiative not only restored sight but also fostered valuable knowledge exchange between experienced specialists and Ugandan medical professionals.

Leading the charge were Dr. Roberto Pineda and Dr. Amy Yvan, renowned retina specialists, alongside Dr. Dave Tarjani, an ophthalmologist, and resident Dr. Feibelman Palmer. Working hand-in-hand with Dr. Sam Ruvuma, Dr. Amos Twinamasiko, and residents from MUST and Ruharo, they tackled the intimidating task of selecting just 18 patients from a staggering 80 in need of cornea transplants.



The lack of a cornea bank in Uganda presented a significant hurdle, but the team persevered, bringing corneas from the US. This logistical feat, coupled with their unwavering dedication, led to successful surgeries for all 18 patients, each one a testament to the combined expertise and compassionate efforts of both teams.



The Head of Department at MUST expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the Harvard team, acknowledging their invaluable contribution in providing "medical support to our people." This initiative transcended mere surgeries; it ignited a spark of knowledge exchange, empowering Ugandan medical professionals with new skills and techniques.



Ophthalmology Support Team, The Backbone of Eye Care



The world of ophthalmology revolves not only around skilled surgeons and meticulous examinations, but also thrives on the dedicated efforts of an often unseen hero: the **ophthalmology support team**. These individuals go beyond simply assisting doctors; they are the “glue” that keeps the intricate machinery of eye care running smoothly.

Their responsibilities, however, aren't limited to a single area. They wear many hats, each essential for the well-being of patients and the smooth operation of the practice. These make a significant impact in areas like:

1. Registration and Record Keeping:

- The team ensures seamless **patient registration**, gath-

ering necessary information and managing appointments efficiently.

- They meticulously **maintain medical records**, ensuring accuracy and accessibility for both doctors and patients.
- Their efforts guarantee smooth transitions between referrals, consultations, tests, and procedures.

2. Pharmacy Management:

- They manage the inventory and dispensing of eye medications, ensuring patients receive the right prescriptions promptly.
- They stay updated on new medications and treatment protocols, offering valuable insights to doctors.
- By handling insurance

approvals and managing costs, they help make treatments accessible.

3. Financial Management:

- The team handles **billing and coding**, ensuring accurate documentation and timely reimbursements.

Beyond the Technical:

While these core areas showcase their technical expertise, the true value of the ophthalmology support team lies in their **compassion and empathy**. They understand the anxieties patients might experience and go the extra mile to put them at ease. They become familiar faces, offering a sense of comfort and trust throughout the treatment journey.

At the watch of the clinic in-charge immaculate (RN) the ophthalmology support team plays an indispensable role in delivering quality eye care.

Their dedication, skills, and commitment to patient well-being are invaluable assets that deserve recognition and appreciation. With their silent yet

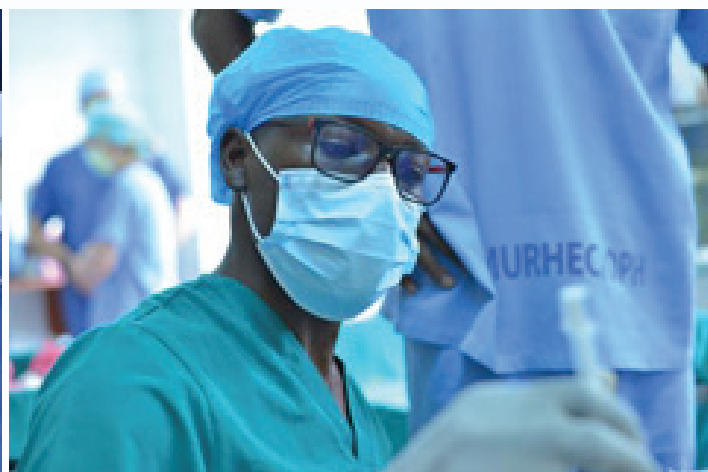
pivotal contributions, they help thousands regain and maintain the precious gift of sight.

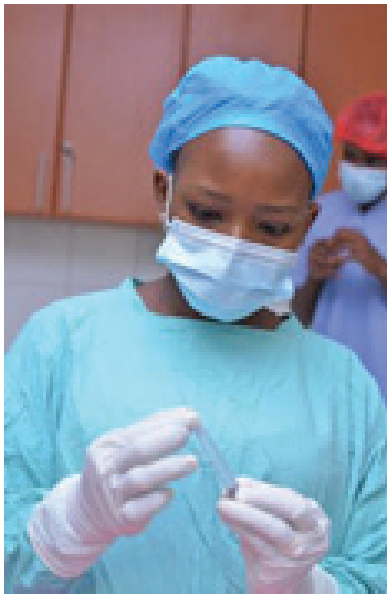


Sr. Immaculate Tumuhimbise the clinic in-charge

Ms. Kyomuhendo Betty the finance officer

Photo moments





**Happy
hour**



By the end of the week, a bittersweet feeling hung in the air. Departures were laden with hugs and promises of further collaboration, More importantly, hearts brimmed with newfound confidence. Residents felt their skills soar, faculty saw their horizons expand, and the entire department pulsed with the thrill of improved optical/ophthalmic care for their community, Patients in disbelief of the offer.



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Succeed we Must.