

Link Letter No.32 January 2012

**Dear friends,**

I am somewhat at a loss about what to write and how to write it, so I'm going to challenge you to a little quiz! I hope you will enjoy finding out what's been going on here in the last few months and what is ahead... answers will follow...

**1. Which department will soon be moving to a new home?**

- a. HIV clinic
- b. Physio dept
- c. Female ward
- d. Children's ward

**2. What was the most exciting thing to happen in early December?**

- a. The number of CD4 tests accepted by the Entebbe lab was increased from 140 to 200 per month
- b. On one day I completed 27 of the 35 things on that day's 'to-do' list

**Question 1 - below is the new home for which department?**



**Alison Fletcher**  
CMS mission partner  
**Uganda**

c. The new structure for Friday morning meetings in the HIV dept took effect

d. All of the above

**3. What was the first thing I sent back to the UK as part of the whole moving-country-and-continent thing?**

- a. A wooden salad bowl
- b. A blanket
- c. A book
- d. A tall wooden giraffe

**4. What party games did we play on Christmas day?**

- a. Pass the parcel
- b. Musical chairs
- c. The chocolate game
- d. All of the above

**5. What did I do over the New Year weekend?**

- a. Watch TV
- b. Sit with my feet in a bucket of cold water

**Kiwoko Hospital**  
**PO Box 149**  
**Luweero**  
**Uganda**  
**physio@kiwokohospital.org**

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- c. Watch birds
- d. Eat chocolate

**6. What did I finish working on in December?**

- a. Drug stock procedures for the HIV clinic dispensary
- b. Staffing planning for the physio department
- c. Plans for handing over student's bible study
- d. New assessment form for the HIV nutrition support programme

**7. What has been the most frustrating thing to happen of late?**

- a. Frequent power cuts
- b. A day in Kampala to do some essential shopping and visit the cinema only to find the film wasn't showing at the only time I could go and three of the five essential things on my list were nowhere to be found!
- c. Traffic jams
- d. Waiting for meetings to start

**8. Which bird was I most excited to see recently?**

- a. A saddle-billed stork
- b. A black-winged stilt
- c. An osprey
- d. A swamp flycatcher

**9. What is in the schedule for this week?**

- a. Organise plans for a special mission weekend at the training schools



**Question 5 - see text on the first page**

- b. Organise annual trip for the Afaayo kids (HIV+ kids club)
- c. Organise annual social and medical education curriculum for the teens HIV+ clinic
- d. All of the above

**10. Approximately how much chocolate do I have in my possession today?**

- a. None
- b. 3.2kg
- c. 5.6kg
- d. 9.5kg

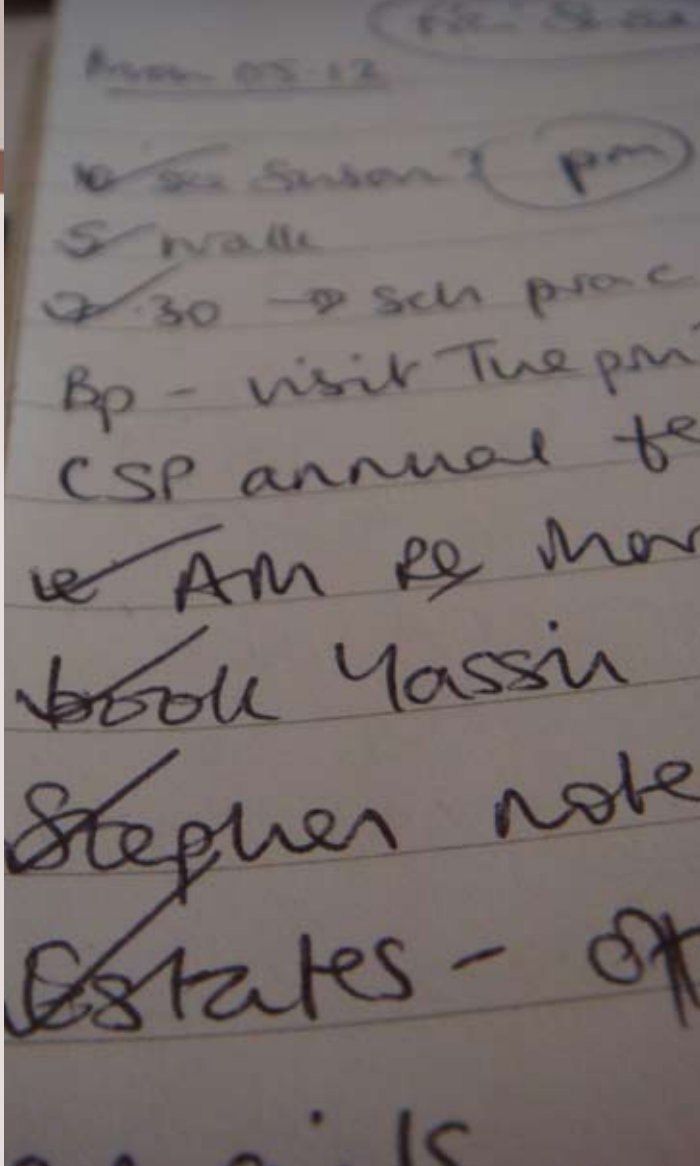
**How did you do?**

Let's see...

**1. B.** The physio department will indeed soon be moving! The new place will not be much bigger, but it is right in the middle of the hospital. The current physio department has always felt right on the edge of the hospital, even though new wards have been built nearer to it in recent years. The new one is right in the middle, between all the wards where we work. It will be good to be closer to them, and to have a place planned around our experience of using the current building. Work is in progress and should be completed soon. I should also add that the three wards mentioned are also not static! The female ward moved to what used to be the maternity ward some months back, work is taking place on renovating the children's

**Question six - see above**

Entry	Height: 1.715m	Weight: 45.5kg	BMI: 15.46	MUAC: 4	Exit date
Relationship: Mum	Seeds g	MUAC:			
<b>nutrition problems</b>					
State why?	Rapid weight loss	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Over how		
For how long?	Vomiting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Frequency		
Frequency + duration	Oral sores	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Stomach pain	'Normal' body weight and how long since weighed this?	60w			
Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> If so, for how long and with what? Admitted c					
one noted					
ARV					



**Question 2 - see text on the first page**

ward (and in fact the new physio dept backs onto it), and today we had a walking-around meeting to plan renovations to the HIV clinic, which will expand in size once the physio dept moves out of its current premises. It is exciting to be involved in such planning.

**2. D.** Firstly, it was a major triumph to get our CD4 test allowance up from 140 to 200 tests per month. We take the samples for this blood test to a lab in Entebbe, as do many other clinics around the country. We were finding that we had to make referrals for two month's time, and it was becoming a problem, particularly for new clients. It is the only objective marker we have of HIV disease progression here, and so getting a result for a new client is important to do as soon after registering as possible.

After many appeals and phonecalls, my colleague William informed me about his success, thankfully with immediate effect. Secondly, yes, my day is sometimes a bit hectic! It is rare to complete everything on the list but there's usually a triumph of some kind

each day. And finally, the new Friday morning meeting structure is in place and working, allowing a structured time for each of the many parts of the HIV team to meet together, and then feed back to the whole department in a clear way. For 18 months I contemplated screaming loudly and running out of the long and arduous meetings, or sighing pointedly when it failed to progress at a speed acceptable to me, but my patience has paid off and the new plan allowing all our sub-teams to have an equal voice seems to be working – at last.

**3. C** and rather than just sending one book back, I've sent around 30kg via visitors... and I probably have about another 30kg to dispose of here! I am gradually starting to sort through the trappings of my life here and work out what I can do without. It seems early to do it... but the end of March will come around soon enough and it is good to get started. The giraffe will go later!

**4. Kind of D!** A was played just as you would imagine, and we enjoyed seeing the little prizes of pencils and sweets revealed at each layer. B was played as musical newspaper-sheets-cos-we-didn't-have-enough-chairs, with much hilarity as Ugandan colleagues played it for the first time. The adults round was far more competitive than the kids (my auntie pipped me to the post and got me out!). C was almost played at our ex-pat Christmas dinner, the week before Christmas – although I'm not sure having to put on a woolly hat and scarf would have been much fun. It was the first time we'd done such a meal at Kiwoko with the works (no sprouts though). It was great fun and with 15 of us there was plenty of conversation!

**5. C.** While my auntie and sister were here, we took a trip to a beautiful game park in the north of the country. We spent the morning on January 1 on a tiny boat on the Nile, admiring the birds. It was a very special morning! I took some chocolate with me but didn't really eat much of it... it's so hot there that it was kind of very soft the whole time. And it is still very tempting to sit with my feet in a bucket of cold water, not much good for work productivity though!

**6. A and D.** As part of a budget review some months back, we realised the HIV clinic dispensary had got through an incredible amount of drugs, and we had no idea why. On further investigation, I saw there was no system of recording or accounting for the drugs and so I worked with the main hospital pharmacy and our clinic nurses to set something up. The system is now in place and working with all the different parts are sorted out, so it should be easier to monitor what is dispensed and check if we are overspending donor money. As for D, the new nutrition form, this was something I tried to start in April, managed to spend three hours on in August and finally completed in December. The new form is much simplified, focuses on medical as well as social causes of nutrition problems, and should be easier for our team to use. I am so excited that it is DONE. B and C are still in progress...

**7. Any of these answers could on any given occasion be the correct one but for today, no prizes for guessing – B!**

Shopping here is a source of uncertainty, as so often the things I want or need are out of stock. Thankfully it is often possible to get a colleague to find a few items, and we often each end up shopping for two or three people every time we go. On this particular Sunday in December, I'd planned my shopping around going to the cinema (dark, air-conditioned peace and quiet), so it was a mega-frustrating day, particularly to discover the reason the film wasn't showing was because a CHURCH was using the premises. Honestly! Messing up my day off!

**8. Hmm it's a hard one...but A.** A love of bird watching is the most unexpected hobby I've developed since being here. Our trip on the Nile was therefore a spectacularly exciting time, and we saw all of these birds on that day. The saddle-billed stork is a marvellously elegant creature with striking colours and very delicate-looking legs. We watched a pair of them and it was a thrilling moment!

**9. A.** B and C are on the radar too, but for the first time ever, the day trip will be totally Ugandan-run. This is really exciting and I'm delighted that our team has progressed this far. The annual curriculum will be used as a guide for planning each month's teens clinic, rather than having a panic on Wednesday what we should do on Thursday. I am trying to prompt and support rather than 'do' in these last few months, and Justine, our children's coordinator will be

taking the lead on both of these activities. As for the special mission weekend, we are busy preparing a follow-up weekend to the week-long programme we ran last May. We had a great time with the students and there were some big areas that came up for further discussion and teaching. We hope to address some of them around the theme of relationships this time. Our planning has been a bit haphazard and actually the weekend was meant to happen last September – so we hope nothing gets in the way of our rescheduled weekend in March.

**10. C...** in a world of few luxuries, good chocolate has become an essential treat. It's hard to convey just how important it is, but there have been days where the absence of chocolate in the fridge has nearly reduced me to tears! Sometimes it is possible to get decent chocolate here, but Cadbury's from anywhere else but the UK just doesn't taste the same. I have ample stocks to get me until the end of March, thanks to deliveries from my parents in October and my Christmas visitors.

In summary, there have been some serious triumphs in recent weeks, mixed in amongst the ongoing frustrations. There is a lot to do in the coming weeks too, and despite having a mental list of the things I want to complete, it's never got as far as being on a piece of paper. I have some meetings in the next few days which will hopefully bring some clarity to the process and start to make clear exactly what to hand on to whom. As well as all that I have enjoyed and will continue to enjoy time and laughter with colleagues. The small things of life really matter here!

**Please pray for:**

- Building work on the physio dept, that we will soon be able to move in and use it
- The HIV dept following major restructuring
- Wisdom for the process of handing over the different aspects of my job here

With much love

*Alison*

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Church Mission Society

Watlington Road, Oxford, OX4 6BZ Tel: 01865 787400 Fax: 01865 776375  
Email: [info@cms-uk.org](mailto:info@cms-uk.org) [www.cms-uk.org](http://www.cms-uk.org) Registered Charity Number 1131655  
Executive Director: The Rev Canon Tim Dakin