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Spring 2006

As a pre-med student, I was fortunate enough to intern at the local hospital during my semester in Ghana. I spent most of my time in the children's ward, watching and learning from the nurses. As a young *obruni* (white person, or foreigner) in a white coat, with almost no clinical experience and a very limited grasp of Twi, I was nothing short of a spectacle. Although I was enthusiastic and excited to learn as much as possible, my attempts at taking vital signs were, in the beginning, nervous and clumsy. What would take only a deft movement from the nurse would take me several minutes of trial and error. Fortunately the nurses were seasoned with years of training nursing students, and patiently helped me learn practical skills. During my internship, I also learned lessons larger than how to measure blood pressures and pulse rates, lessons about the miracle of medicine, and about the meeting of two different cultures.

My story starts one morning in March, a couple of weeks since my start at the hospital. There was much bustle and busyness in the ward, and I soon found out a new patient had just arrived. I followed one of the nurses, affectionately known as Auntie Philo, to the farthest section of the ward. It turns out that I could have found my way to the new patient on my own—the walls were so loud, and a flurry of activity surrounded the patient's bed. My first glimpse of the patient, a girl of perhaps nine years named Antiya, is one that remains vivid in my memory—a small, thin girl, skin covered in a rash, lips swollen with infection, and the delicate skin of the eyelids raw and infected so that she was unable to open her eyes. The moment I walked in, the nurses and her mother were holding her down, trying to squirt saline solution on her eyelids and lashes while she screamed miserably. Antiya was the sickest patient I had ever seen, and I couldn't imagine how she could possibly be healthy again. So, it came as a surprise when Auntie Philo told me that she would in fact be fine again. Antiya had German measles, a viral infection which would simply have to run its course, while antibiotics would treat her infections.

While I was excited to hear that Antiya would be okay, the image of her at her sickest stayed with me and I remained incredulous that someone so sick could recover so quickly. Each day she seemed a little better, and one of these days was particularly memorable. I was following the nurses during the morning change of shift, when the night shift nurses update the morning shift nurses on each patient's condition and progress. When we came to Antiya's bed, it was obvious that she was feeling a little better, but was still quite sick and her eyes remained closed. The nurses spoke to her in Twi, and I heard the word "*obruni*" a number of times.

Then they said in English, "Antiya, open your eyes. See the *obruni* girl here. Open your eyes." I watched as Antiya tilted her head back and gingerly

pulled her eyelids up a little with her fingers. "I see her," she said. To test her, the nurses asked, "What color is she wearing?" Antiya replied, "*Fitaa*" (Twi for "white"), which prompted broad smiles on nurses and patient alike. For my part, I felt overwhelmed by the thrill of seeing what medicine makes possible. A few days before, I had thought she was sure to succumb to this illness; now, she was noticeably improving. I was also feeling a new sense of satisfaction—my *obruni* status, which always drew so much attention and made me such a spectacle, had this time been exploited for good.

After a weekend off, I returned on a Monday morning and sat down in my chair as usual, waiting for rounds to start. After a few minutes, a woman and her daughter walked into the ward. I turned to say hello and was surprised to see that it was Antiya and her mother. "Antiya!" I couldn't help but exclaim, "You must be feeling better!" She nodded and smiled. She spoke a little bit of English and I spoke a very little bit of Twi, and in this way we chatted for a few moments. Before she went back to her bed, she stuck her hand out to shake mine. I recalled all the precautions the nurses had ordered me to take around her, and wondered for a brief moment if she was very contagious. But then I looked her in her eyes, half-opened, and she smiled, and I forgot all of those other thoughts. I took her small hand in mine, and I shook it and wished her well. As she made her way back to her bed, I reflected that while we used our differences in race to get Antiya to open her eyes, there are some things, like a smile, that transcend race and culture. I forgot, for a minute, how much of a spectacle I was in the children's ward of a hospital in Ghana. I felt, for the moment, like less of an outsider. And, I will admit, this made me smile even more.