On January 23rd, a 40 person head strong team travelled to the Mure Memorial Hospital of Nagpur to commence the 6th Cleft Palate Camp (12th camp in NCF history).

Our team consisted of non medics, who volunteered in day to day running of the camp, taking patients back to the ward, keeping a log of drugs used etc, students, scrub nurses, ODPs, 7 anaesthetic SPRs, MFU SPRs, 7 anaesthetic consultants and 1 MFU fellow and 4 MFU consultants. Once we arrived, it was working with the Rotary Club of Nagpur West that we were able to find our patients, have blood tests already available to us (Hb, hepatitis and HIV status) and run pre op clinics with translators.

The camp required immense organisation before we arrived, with specific communication between the 7 anaesthetic SPRs, see below, to discuss what we would take and what we hoped to achieve once out there.

Dr George Teturswamy, the camps founder, rented out monitors, drugs and equipment and we took 4 life boxes out with us.

We had 5 operating tables set up, 2 in theatre 1, 2 in theatre 2 and 1 in theatre 3. The hospital ceased all elective work and had one theatre running for their own emergencies. Between us we set up a 7 person SPR rota that gave us all equal opportunity in theatre and in recovery (one recovery nurse) and pre op clinic.

In the morning, 2 anaesthetics SPRs, would arrive at hospital for 7am to draw up our stockpile of anaesthetic drugs for the day (so as not to cause waste and confusion due to lack of work space), we
would have a morning huddle and get to work. We used halothane Tec 6 vaporisers, hand ventilated our patients and all but one theatre did not have ETCO2 monitoring.

Our days would finish at the earliest 4pm and the latest 10pm and there was a different ethos in the team while we were there. We all felt that we were there to work hard and almost felt guilty for the odd early finish, a definite difference to our everyday jobs at home. But patient safety was paramount so it was made sure late finishes weren’t a daily occurrence.

We also managed to have fun in our everyday work, visiting the ward and playing with the children, they particularly liked balloons and bubbles. We managed to get time off also to visit the local market and also had two parties while we were there. The first was held by ourselves for the Rotarians of Nagpur West and the second was held towards the end of our stay which was hosted by the Rotarians comprising of a prize giving ceremony and show.

I would definitely recommend this trip to anyone wanting to be part of a wonderful voluntary team as well as increase their paediatric/developing world anaesthetic skills.

The skills I improved on this trip were both non clinical and clinical: teamworking; adaptability; improvisation; calculation of paediatric doses; cannulation; intubation and ventilation of less than 1 year olds; use of halothane and its side effects and use of the Goldman draw over vaporiser.

I would like to thank the AAGBI for the generous grant of £500 towards my voluntary trip to Nagpur India. It was immensely rewarding and enjoyable.