

**Research, Education & Travel Grants 2011**  
**Winner of the Stanley Rowbotham Fund**  
**Dr Laura Peltola**

**Project Title:**

Voluntary Work at the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Blantyre, Malawi

**Project Description**

The Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Blantyre, is the largest hospital in Malawi, with approximately 1000 beds and approximately 1300 in-patients. They run 7 to 8 operating theatres a day, including 12,000 deliveries per annum. In total, Dr Gregor Pollach (Head of Anaesthesia) estimates that the hospital is treating approximately 500,000 in- and out-patients a year.

I will be joining the Anaesthetics Department in the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital. This department provides anaesthesia for a wide range of surgical specialties including general, orthopaedic, urology, neurosurgery, ENT, ophthalmology, burns and plastics, obstetrics and gynaecology and paediatrics. There is also a four-bedded ITU (one of two ITUs in the country) providing care for a spectrum of medical and surgical, paediatric and adult, patients. I will be working alongside the anaesthetists and clinical officers to initially learn how to provide safe anaesthesia in a developing world environment, after which I intend to be a dedicated and hardworking team member.

With the hospital associated with the University of Malawi Medical School, I hope to participate in the teaching of fourth year medical students and anaesthetic clinical officers. Currently, there is not a single Malawian anaesthetist in the country. Dr Gregor Pollach is in the process of developing the curriculum for the first Specialist Training Programme in Anaesthesia and Intensive Care in Malawi, to try to ensure a self-sustainable anaesthetic faculty for the future. This would be an exciting project to be involved in. Furthermore, I have made contact with the Scotland Malawi Partnership, which is an organisation established by Scottish anaesthetists to deliver teaching courses in Malawi on topics including resuscitation, intensive care and lessons to learn from local mortality and morbidity meetings. I hope to be a member of the faculty on their next course in Winter 2011.

Additionally, I hope to undertake some study/research projects while in Blantyre, although the nature of this work is yet to be confirmed.

Prior to heading to Malawi, I hope to collect medical equipment that may be of use to the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, and I will endeavour to secure funding for some pulse oximeters via lifebox.org. To date, I have raised in excess of £580 for Lifebox, which will provide three pulse oximeters and training material to the hospital.

I believe I will learn far more from this experience than I can offer the department, but I hope that by spending several months in Blantyre, I will get more than a snapshot of their healthcare system and I will become a helpful member of the team.