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Rehabilitation of pediatric ward at Malawi hospital will improve care for children

HOUSTON – (Aug. 20, 2009) – A new grant to renovate the pediatric ward at Kamuzu Central Hospital is helping the Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative and the Malawi Ministry of Health improve health services for all children seeking care at Kamuzu Central Hospital in Malawi.

The rehabilitation of the ward follows the opening of the Baylor Clinical Center of Excellence at Kamuzu, which provides state-of-the-art care for children with HIV.

Both of these programs are supported by the Abbott Fund, the philanthropic foundation of Abbott, the global health care company.

Kamuzu Central Hospital is the primary referral center for the central region of Malawi, which is estimated to have a population of 2.5 million children.

Currently, the hospital's pediatric ward has 215 beds and admits an average of 859 children a month, or 28 children a day, limiting the capacity of children the hospital can serve.

There are an estimated 88,000 children infected with HIV/AIDS in Malawi and 850,000 orphaned by the disease.

“The modernization of the Kamuzu pediatric ward is another step in the Abbott Fund's commitment to enhancing access to health care throughout the world,” said Catherine Babington, president of the Abbott Fund. “It will add critical and sustainable hospital capacity in Malawi, and provide higher quality care for pediatric patients.”

The Abbott Fund is providing \$1.5 million to support this new effort.

Major goals of the rehabilitation include the reduction of patient crowding and transmission of diarrheal and respiratory illnesses, improvement of access to health care providers for patients, better resource allocation and creation of more space for efficient emergency services.

Construction began in early August 2009 and is anticipated to be completed by the end of December 2009.

“Malawi has one of the highest childhood mortality rates in children under age 5 in the world,” said Mike Mizwa, senior vice president and chief operating officer of BIPAI. “This excessive mortality can be attributed to both the direct effects of HIV/AIDS as well as compromised care of orphaned children or children whose parents are also ravaged by the infection.”

The hospital serves as a primary access point to identification, care and treatment of HIV/AIDS in Malawian children, and the much-needed renovations combined with the pediatric Center of Excellence are expected to improve management of pediatric HIV/AIDS care in the region.

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