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# Groin hernia surgery in northern Ghana—humanitarian mission of Polish surgeons in Tamale

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*Polski Przegląd Chirurgicalny 2015 March 1, 87 (1): 16-21*

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**UNLABELLED:** Availability of surgical care in Africa is severely limited. This is due to the lack of surgeons and a small number of public hospitals. Only 25 out of 100,000 patients with inguinal hernia undergo a surgical treatment. As many as 65% of inguinal hernia repairs are performed urgently because of incarceration. Among patients with incarceration who do not reach the hospital there is recorded as many as 87 deaths per 100 cases. In order to improve the availability of treatment of inguinal hernia in Africa, humanitarian medical missions involving surgeons from Europe are organized. During regular visits to selected centers in Africa, they also carry out intensified treatment of patients and training of the local staff. The aim of the study was to present the experience of Polish surgeons from the humanitarian medical mission in Tamale in northern Ghana undertaken in fall of 2014.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS:** Surgical repair was performed in 87 patients (74 men - 85% and 13 women - 15%) between the ages of 26 to 70 years (mean 52.8 years; SD 10.3), who underwent a total of 98 inguinal hernia repairs under local anesthesia.

**RESULTS:** Lichtenstein procedure was performed in 93 and Desarda technique in 5 patients. Patients reported the long-term presence of hernia symptoms - from one to 7 years (mean 3.4 years, SD 1.4). In most patients, hernia occurred more than 3 years earlier (61 patients; 70%). There were no intraoperative complications. All patients were discharged the next day after surgery. There was one wound infection in postoperative period which required mesh explantation.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Inguinal hernia commonly found in Ghana is a major issue for the inefficient health care system. Humanitarian medical missions can help to improve the treatment results, as long as they are carried out periodically and allow for training of local personnel. Scarce equipment of medical facilities in Ghana is not a significant difficulty in performing the Lichtenstein repair under the local anesthesia.

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