



"I left everything I knew about infection prevention practice in New Zealand and brought only the basic IPC principles wrapped in - kindness, respect, and a love for connection."

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE IPC PRACTICE

Cultural humility as a clinical skill

Global Mercy, Sierra Leone, West Africa

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Global Mercy

Sierra Leone

West Africa

- August – December 2025
- Humanitarian surgical hospital ship
- High-volume surgical service
- Multinational clinical team
- Local Sierra Leonean healthcare workers
- Low-resource, high-complexity environment

IPC practice onboard the Global Mercy



Kenema, Sierra Leone

A six-hour journey to a rural village to reframe IPC for me

I grew up with an uncomplicated, personal relationship with water.

In that village, water was communal, scarce, and hard-won.





Cultural humility began the moment I stopped assuming my reality was the default



STORY 1 — KNOWLEDGE AS DIGNITY



"Do you know what MRSA stands for?"

The whole group went silent. They had been isolating patients for MRSA for two years. Not one of them knew what the letters meant.

STORY 2 — DESIGN FOR THE PEOPLE IN FRONT OF YOU



STORY 3 — WHEN EDUCATION BECOMES RELATIONSHIP

We were handed a USB stick with someone else's curriculum. We realised immediately: this is not ours to teach.





Everyone hugging. Appreciating each other's journey.
It was life education — and we had all learned from each other.

CULTURAL HUMILITY IS A CLINICAL SKILL



Self-Reflection



Power-Sharing



Trust as Mechanism



Curiosity Over Certainty



Contextual Responsiveness
Continuous Improvement

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE IPC PRACTICE

Every protocol we write, every behaviour we try to change, every patient or colleague who doesn't comply the way we expect, is an invitation to ask ...

Whose reality does this reflect?

Mine, or theirs?

None of it needed to be in Africa. It just made the question of looking at my own unconscious bias, impossible to avoid.



Thank you

For letting me tell my story, I look forward to hearing yours.....