Editorial

Time

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The corrugated iron roof brought shade but no cooling as the equator midday sun turned the small church into an oven. Last night's rains had flooded the most direct route so it took us a long time to get there. The dirt road was very bumpy and once again I thanked rubber tires for their existence. The minister had waited for us at the road side, as otherwise we would never have found the turn leading up to his church, the simplest of constructions you can imagine. On entering we were welcomed by some 50 people who had been patiently awaiting our arrival. 'Europeans have watches, Africans have time' goes the saying. In other words, Africans have patience, Europeans don't. It's true.

The minister spoke words of welcome. Monica, a very hard working and heart-driven volunteer, had been invited by the minister to come to this remote place a month earlier. She had treated lots of people then and now they came forward to testify the results. This little church witnessed more miracles in a day than the Notre Dame in a year. It was a win-win situation for the minister as ever since he had brought homeopathy to his church, his congregation had grown substantially. A very old lady was one of the last to testify. She stood remarkably straight and told that her pain and stiffness were gone. 'A miracle. She used to walk completely bent over and look at her now', the minister whispered in my ear.

The team continued to treat new patients and I walked over to a young woman who had also testified and sat down next to her. Sarah used to be bedridden and had shown how she was now able to walk with crutches. I asked her to tell me her story. Her husband had died from AIDS some years ago, she told, and as she was tested HIV positive and showed lowered immunity, she was put on antiretroviral drugs (ARVs). Soon she became completely paralysed. Not from AIDS but from the ARVs that were supposed to save her. Not only had she been completely unable to walk, she wasn't even able to sit and eat by herself. Her mother was taking care of her, fed her, washed her and helped her with practically everything. Her children saw their mother was no longer able to take care of them and they abandoned her and sought shelter with relatives. The paralysis was so total that even her voice was weak and trembling. After she had been given PC1 (genus epidemicus remedy for HIV/AIDS) she started to improve. Luckily PC1 not only cures AIDS but also significantly reduces the side effects of ARVs. 'Now' she said, 'I can eat by myself again and move around the house'(►**Fig. 1**).

I've seen more cases like Sarah. Men and women, lying in their huts, wasting away. All over Africa there must be thousands. You don't see them in the streets but you can find them in statistics as being saved by ARVs. Monica can't tell her to stop the ARVs as that would be illegal and jeopardise her work, so it's very fortunate that the treatment she gives also sufficiently takes care of the side effects of ARVs.

I've often wondered what would happen if there would be one case treated with homeopathy that would have side effects as severe as Sarah's. It's not unlikely that it would lead to a total prohibition of homeopathy.

In the meantime, Sarah's children have heard she had been seen moving around and sitting in front of the hut and they had come to visit her. It will take more time for her to be able to take care of them again, but being an African time is what she has got.

We can learn that from Monica's treatment of Sarah. To work in silence and just be grateful for the miracles we're allowed to witness. Recognition will come—with time, on time.

Fig. 1 Sarah (fictitious name).

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