

## The Opportunity

JOA is pleased to support Virtual Doctors (VD) in their mission to connect healthcare professionals across the globe. Virtual Doctors encourage collaboration within the medical field by facilitating virtual consultations on specific cases in regions which lack access to sufficient healthcare resources.

## Who are Virtual Doctors?

In 1998, a British safari guide named Huw Jones witnessed a tragic incident in rural Zambia where a pregnant woman and her unborn child died due to delayed medical care. This inspired the creation of the Virtual Doctor service, which leverages technology to provide remote medical advice to isolated health centres, reducing preventable deaths. Virtual Doctors is now an established charity in the UK and Zambia.

**Virtual Doctors Objective:** To help improve local primary healthcare in some of the most remote and impoverished areas of sub-Saharan Africa.

"As an organisation we aim to support clinical officers as they become more self-sufficient. We hope to empower them to share their knowledge with others, thereby strengthening community healthcare systems."

**Virtual Doctors Vision Statement:** Our highly accessible and user-friendly software, in the form of an App loaded onto a Smartphone, links workers in rural clinics to volunteer doctors. We provide training from the outset as well as sustained medical and technical support, education and feedback.

## How does it work?

If a Clinical Officer in Zambia (or Malawi) sees a patient and needs further advice, they can upload case details on their smartphone via an App. The case is then allocated to a volunteer, who will receive an email notification of the case. The volunteer logs on to the Virtual Doctor website where they can view the case and associated documentation. Each case needs a response within 24 hours. There is an option to set yourself as unavailable if you are out of the country or otherwise unable to answer cases. Cases can be reassigned if they fall outside of the volunteer's medical knowledge or specialty. A case will typically take about 20 minutes each to complete and on average volunteers should expect to get 2-3 cases a week, however this may vary depending on your speciality and if other users are away. CPD documentation can be provided by the medical team for annual NHS appraisals: we estimate 0.25 points per case.

[If you would like to learn more about the nature of the opportunity you can listen to VD's podcast by clicking here!](#)

Or if you would like to hear from some of the previous volunteers and beneficiaries click on the following links:

1. [Click here for a video recording accounts from Virtual Doctor volunteers and beneficiaries](#)
2. [Click here for a different video recording accounts from Virtual Doctor volunteers](#)

## Responding to cases

- Volunteers are asked to provide a response within 24 hours to ensure timely guidance and each case usually takes approximately 20 minutes.
- If you are unavailable—for example, while traveling or during a busy period—you can mark yourself as unavailable through the platform.
- Cases outside your area of expertise can easily be reassigned to a colleague with the appropriate specialty.

## Requirements:

### **For doctors:**

- Active GMC or HCPZ registration
- CCT\* (for UK doctors)
- A reliable internet connection

\*If you do not yet have CCT but are a senior registrar with qualifications such as DTM&H and are approaching CCT, you may still be eligible. Please reach out to discuss your situation further.

## Can I volunteer if I'm not a doctor?

Whilst this opportunity is primarily geared towards facilitating collaboration and support between doctors, VD are also looking for nurses, midwives and physios to contribute to ongoing pilot schemes. If you have an interest in global health, particularly wound care, childhood development, antenatal care and injury rehabilitation then please get in touch.

## Indemnity and support

Volunteers benefit from a Memorandum of Understanding with the Zambian Government, which indemnifies against the rare possibility of a complaint or litigation. The charity also provides medical malpractice insurance, covering individual volunteers up to £1 million. If you're passionate about global health and want to make a meaningful impact, we encourage you to get in touch.

## Where might I be in contact with?

Key focus countries have previously been Zambia and Malawi, where Virtual Doctors have made strides in supporting the development of healthcare. In Zambia, this has been through the expansion of services to 290 clinics and hospitals which they achieved in 2023. In Malawi, at the request of the Ministry of Health, VD have supported six rural health centres.

## What are the costs?

There are no associated fees with this volunteering and applications are open year round. For further information regarding the activities, criteria please read the document attached below.

## How do I apply?

If you are interested in applying please contact us at [enquiries@joa.uk](mailto:enquiries@joa.uk)