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Press Release

Telemedicine Charity launch Covid-19 Resource Bank for rural health workers in Zambia and Malawi.

the Virtual Doctors (VDrs) have launched their COVID-19 Resource Bank (<https://vdrforums.org.uk/covid19/>) aimed at providing educational and professional support to the 140 rural health centres that they work with in rural Zambia and Malawi. Following guidelines from the Zambian Ministry of Health, based upon those from the WHO, the site aims to offer a one-stop resource for the busy clinical officers on the ground using the Virtual Doctors' telemedicine service.

The resource bank has been developed as part of the charity's COVID-19 response. Focused on infection prevention and consisting of an Education as well as a WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene) initiative, the Virtual Doctors' Coronavirus response is supported by the VDRs Covid-19 Response Fund, set up for this purpose: <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/12801#!/DonationDetails>.

The WASH initiative started off as an assessment and detailed plan on how to improve basic hygiene and sanitation at 140 the health centres supported by the Virtual Doctors in 23 districts, resulting in the VDRs' commitment to support these necessary improvements, in practical terms and in partnership with the Zambian Ministry of Health, by supplementing hand washing equipment.

The Education initiative builds on the VDRs' existing mission to empower rural health workers through diagnostic advice and on-going education: collaborating closely with the Zambian Ministry of Health across 23 districts, the Virtual Doctors produce and share resources that address the COVID-19 pandemic, looking specifically at how it can be managed in low resource settings like rural Zambia. The Charity's suggested solution is to use its telemedicine portal to offer appropriate infection prevention and control advice to the clinical officers they work with, and also distribute appropriate health promotion posts to the health centres, with support from the Ministry of Health.

Since 2010, the Virtual Doctors have worked hand in hand with the Zambian Ministry of Health and more recently Malawi to help improve the quality of primary health care for rural communities via telemedicine. Now their work is more critical than ever before. Telemedicine and e-learning can support social distancing by disseminating knowledge remotely, enabling virtual triage and reducing unnecessary referrals to distant and overburdened hospitals. As a key provider of such resources in the region, the VDRs are ideally suited to help in battling this outbreak. the VDRs' Executive Director & Founder, Huw Jones, says "we can play a key role in supporting the Ministry of Health respond to this unprecedented crisis. We are perfectly positioned to recognise critical needs and ways in which we can provide immediate assistance. We hope many will join us by contributing to the Virtual Doctors' COVID-19 Response Fund established with an initial contribution of £10,000 by our Board".

To learn more visit <https://www.virtualdoctors.org/new-vdrs-c19-response-and/> or contribute directly to the Fund on <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/12801#!/DonationDetails>.

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About the Virtual Doctors

the Virtual Doctors is a UK-based charity (reg no 1129924) that helps rural health workers in Africa to connect to doctors and medical specialists in the UK who respond with diagnosis and treatment advice, helping to save lives. By providing sophisticated yet easy to use telemedicine software and state of the art technology the charity has three clear aims:

- to help reduce unnecessary mortality and morbidity by allowing rural health workers to treat more patients on-site.
- to reduce unnecessary referrals to distant and hard-to-reach hospitals
- to improve the skills and knowledge of rural health workers

the Virtual Doctors relies 100% on charitable donations to support its work.

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