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FEATURE

From Tuscany



This photo was taken in Tuscany and was placed in the Ospedale Santa Maria Nuova in Florence, Italy.



This photo was taken in Kyoto, Japan, and was sent to PCEA Kikuyu Hospital in Kenya, Africa.

to Tokyo...

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ELAINE POGGI**

Photographing the beauty of nature around the world is what I do for fun. From the rolling hills of Tuscany, to the white sandy tropical beaches of Zanzibar and the Maldiv Islands, from the multicolored underwater world in the Red Sea, to the cherry blossoms in Tokyo—I see beauty wherever I go. I try to capture the image, and then my greatest joy is to share it with others.

For the past five years, I have been sharing my colorful photos with those who find themselves in healthcare facilities—patients, family members, and staff. I have visited hospitals in many parts of the world and they all have one thing in common—bare, white, sterile walls. Adding all the bare walls together, we have thousands of miles of potential space for art. In effect, our hospitals could be considered the world's largest museum, with millions of visitors every day, but

FEATURE





Above: This photo was taken in the Dolomite Mountains in Northern Italy and was sent recently to a children's hospital in Warsaw, Poland – Warszawski Szpital Dla Dzieci.

with little or no art at all displayed on most of their walls.

In 2002, I tried to change that by creating The Foundation for Photo/Art in Hospitals, an American nonprofit public charity. Through the Foundation, nearly 1,600 photos have been placed in healthcare facilities on five continents. Since I donate my photos to the Foundation, our cost of producing the framed photos is minimal.

Our projects have many international aspects. A Polish volunteer recently coordinated a project of placing photos of mountain animals from the Italian Dolomites in a Polish children's hospital, Warszawski Szpital Dla Dzieci. A Venezuelan student studying international healthcare coordinated a project for two hospitals in Caracas, Hospital Ortopedico Infantil and Jm De Los Rios, placing photos from Egypt and England. A volunteer medical student from the United States helped place photos of Japanese cherry blossoms and underwater photos from the Red Sea and the Maldives in the PCEA Kikuyu Hospital in Kenya. A Haitian young woman, educated in the United States, coordinated a photo project placing tropical beach photos from the Seychelles and Maldives in the Hospital Albert Schweitzer in Haiti. An Italian woman coordinated the placement of underwater photos from the Maldives and American landscapes in the Kanto Chuo Hospital in Tokyo. The staff of Englewood Hospital in New Jersey chose a variety of photos of the Tuscan hills and Zanzibar's tropical beaches for their facility. The

Opposite: This photo was taken in Zanzibar, Africa and was recently placed in the Hospital Albert Schweitzer in Deschapelles, Haiti.

American Episcopal Church in Florence, Italy, sponsored a photo project for the psychiatric unit in Europe's oldest hospital, Ospedale Santa Maria Nuova in Florence.

Sometimes I choose the photos, but I prefer that the hospital's nurses and physicians choose, with the input of patients, if possible. In this way, they make the project their own, and thus are more likely to converse about their favorite images and so forth. Sometimes they choose photos that could be considered familiar local images. Sometimes they prefer images that are completely new to them.

For children's hospitals, animal or underwater photos are usually chosen; children everywhere are naturally interested in "friendly" animals and are attracted by bright colors. In the African hospitals, a variety of photos of places around the world were chosen—perhaps because patients and staff will never see other parts of the world and are curious. Tropical photos were chosen by the Haitian coordinator for the hospital in Haiti because Haiti has beautiful beaches and she thought the patients would enjoy the familiarity. Staff from the hospital in Tokyo chose many photos of Tuscany, a favorite Japanese travel destination. All the photos placed in the psychiatric ward of the hospital in Florence were of beautiful Italian landscapes, many from surrounding hills; these patients need to feel safe, with familiar surroundings and less stimulation.

As I photograph the splendor of nature wherever I travel, I am thinking of the patients who will view the images. I know the calming effects of nature firsthand because of my experience in caring for my mother during her three-month stay in the hospital in 2001. I



This photo was taken in the Maldiv Islands and was recently placed in the Englewood Hospital in New Jersey.



placed my photos in her room to bring her color and comfort. It is because of this experience that I dedicate my time and talents to creating healing environments in healthcare facilities around the world through sharing the beauty of nature. **HD**

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Left: This photo was taken in the Maldiv Islands and was recently placed in the Kanto Chuo Hospital in Tokyo, Japan.