



FRIENDS FOR HEALTH IN HAITI

HEADLINES

A quarterly newsletter by founder and executive director, Catherine E. Wolf, MD MPH

NOTE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DR. CATHERINE WOLF

This month marks 15 months since Cherlie and I have been to the US. We have chosen to experience the coronavirus pandemic from here rather than from there and, thus far, it seems to have been a wise decision. Aside from lacking a haircut (Dr. Wolf), dental and medical check-ups as well as salads, pizza and hamburgers, we've managed just fine and have stayed safe and healthy in the process. We have been very sad to see the tremendous death toll of COVID in the US and send our sincere condolences to those who have lost loved ones during this difficult time. It has been hard for us to understand people putting their own freedom before the health of other people. The Public Health approach (we are, after all, public health practitioners here) is to be concerned about the population as a whole, and sometimes that involves making sacrifices such as applying general safety measures, rationing supplies and resources and setting priorities for services. As Christians we should be especially willing to make sacrifices for the good of others. It is the cross we bear in order to follow Christ.

THE "PROGRAM"

At Centre de Sante de Gatineau, we have always tried to improve the medical services we provide to our patients. But, over time, there had developed so much competition for our services that some of our most faithful and long-term patients were being left out. If they didn't come to the clinic early enough in the morning, they didn't get a number to be seen in consultation that day, so they had to go to another clinic or come back another day. I began hearing hypertension patients say to me, "I came three times last month and couldn't pass, so I didn't refill my blood pressure medication. That's why my blood pressure is so high today, doctor." The not-so-subtle implication was that it was my fault they weren't able to be seen! So, I took it as a challenge to change our processes. And change we did! Now, patients with uncomplicated hypertension are put in a special "program" where they are seen as follow-up patients (without a number) by the nurses, who check their vital signs, obtain a brief history and write their basic prescriptions on the chart. Then, they are seen by the doctors who decide if any changes are needed to their prescriptions and send them on to the pharmacy. Most of the patients are on their way home by noon and they are very grateful for the expeditious care they receive. The new process is so popular even patients without hypertension are asking if they can be in "the program". It has definitely improved compliance for the nearly 200 patients who are enrolled in the program and has enabled us to move patients through the clinic more rapidly and see more people each day. It's been a win/win situation for everyone!



Clinic nurses do vital signs and take the history of patients in our hypertension program.



SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN.....

In our outpatient clinic in Gattineau, we always have a soft spot for children. They are the most vulnerable of all age groups in Haiti and suffer the most from poverty, violence and food insecurity. This is why we have been especially grateful to be a part of two important government programs here. One is the **nutrition program**, in which we screen all children under five years of age for acute and chronic malnutrition and the other is our recently established immunization program for children and pregnant women. We're thrilled to be able to have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of these little ones! We recently had a visit from a caregiver who works in a private orphanage in Jérémie. She had brought to us a little three year old girl who was obviously malnourished and stunted in her growth. She was quiet to the point of being apathetic but when given a pretty little beanie baby, she clutched it tight to her body, looking down at it and then back at us as if asking the question "Is this really for me?" We started her on nutritional supplements and saw her back a month later. The change in her appearance was thrilling to see.



Little Rose Berlande holding her new beanie baby and we hoped it would help her eat better!



Rose Berlande a month later with a smile on her face. Nice work, beanie!!



Mama winces as her infant daughter gets her first immunization.

Our **immunization program** got off to a good start in October 2020 and we've been vaccinating children and pregnant women each Tuesday since then. Our numbers have been increasing as word of the program spreads to surrounding communities and we're grateful to be able to offer this important service to those who live around the clinic. Tuesdays are hard on the clinic staff members' ears as the infants wail while being weighed and measured and cry even harder when they actually get the injections. Sometimes the mothers aren't far from tears themselves!

LOCAL NEWS

The political situation in Haiti continues to be unstable and we remain at a Level 4 security level according to the US State Department. At this time it's hard to see any end to the instability but Haiti never seems to follow any standard patterns of behavior, so who knows?

We do want you to know that once we are able to have short-term visitors down here again, they will have a beautiful new airport in Jérémie to welcome them! The runway is now paved and the airport terminal re-designed and a local airline, Sunrise Airways, flies round-trip from Port-au-Prince to Jérémie three times a week. We're ready to receive you whenever COVID and the political situation allow!



Jérémie airport after 2016 hurricane



The newly redesigned airport terminal in Jérémie



Save the Date for our 2021 Online Fundraising Event

In 2010, we started hosting our largest fundraising event of the year at the beautiful, historic Wisconsin Club in downtown Milwaukee. In the spring of 2020, as COVID-19 spread quickly across the US, we pivoted to having our annual spring fundraising event online. We thank everyone who took part in this virtual event. Out of continued concern for the health and safety of our FHH supporters, we will be making our 2021 spring banquet an online event as well. This important fundraising gala will be held online on **Saturday, April 24, 2021**. Please watch your mail, email and our Facebook page for all the details!

What a year it was!

Save the Date Online Event
 Saturday, April 24, 2021
 7:00 PM CDT/8:00 PM ET

Annual Banquet to Support
 Friends For Health IN HAITI

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION



Our three clinic nurses teach patients about malaria at the start of a clinic session

We try to make patient and community education central to all of our programs in Haiti. Each day in our clinic we do health teaching for everyone as they wait for consultations to begin. We discuss hypertension, diabetes, malaria, nutrition, immunizations and coronavirus. Then each individual patient receives education regarding their own specific medical problem or issue. They receive detailed instructions regarding how to take their medications with circles written on the medication packages to indicate how many times a day they should take the meds. In spite of all of our efforts, sometimes the messages just don't go through. It proves that it's not the education per se that makes a difference, it's the behavior change that the education creates that's the proof of the pudding!

Right now we are in the process of evaluating our Water and Sanitation community development program to see if, indeed, all the years of community education being provided by our volunteer Promoters is actually changing behaviors. Gemi and one of our Promoters are randomly visiting houses in two sets of communities to assess their knowledge about water and hygiene and observe their practices to see how they collect water, treat it, store it and wash their hands in the course of their daily lives. The first 6 communities they visit will be communities where our volunteer Promoters have been doing education for many years. They've already been "educated" and we want to see if their practices have changed. Then, the second set of communities is 6 new communities where we want to expand our Water and Sanitation program. So, we're evaluating these new communities to see what their baseline knowledge and practices are before we train Promoters to bring community education on water and hygiene to them. Stay tuned for the results in a few months!



Rural family's "tippy tap", a low resource method of washing hands without contaminating the water container.



MAKING PROGRESS IN OUR SPECIAL PROJECTS



Water & Sanitation

- We are planning to train another 12 volunteer Community Promoters from 6 new communities on water and hygiene issues so we can expand this valuable program even further.
- The training will occur after we complete a baseline survey assessing the present knowledge and practices in the new communities.
- See Page 3 Article "The Importance of Education"



Goat Program

- Recently in our Goat Program we're finding that several adult goats, including one of the large bucks, and many baby goats are dying.
- When the farmers have met with the Goat Program supervisors they are convinced that the deaths are the result of fetishes and the "devil". We obviously think otherwise, but the medical cause of their deaths is an enigma to our veterinary technicians.
- Please pray for understanding and freedom from the traditional voodoo beliefs that are prevalent in the rural areas here.



Open-Air Spiritual & Community Center

- Construction has slowed lately due to heavy rains so we're using the time to design and order iron for the balcony and stair railings, doors and windows.
- Our thanks to Thomas Lee, the New Jersey architect who designed the whole building and has been advising on all aspects of its construction.



Diabetes Institute

- We've enrolled several new patients into this wonderful program and they are grateful for the financial relief it offers.
- Most of the DI patients come very regularly and make sure not to miss doses of their medications.
- We're still looking for a reasonable source of insulin for ones who are not controlled on oral medications.



Education Program

- All the students we're supporting in the Education Program have begun a new school year, in spite of periodic unrest and instability in the country.
- We're praying for them to do well and to advance in their studies.



Clinic Indigent Patient Fund

- This fund has gotten a lot more use lately as families struggle just to survive.
- We're assisting many people in purchasing medications that they need as well as providing elderly patients and parents of young children with rice and beans to supplement their diets.