



A quarterly newsletter for Friends for Health in Haiti, by founder and executive director, Catherine E. Wolf, MD MPH

### Our Mission

The mission of Friends for Health in Haiti, Inc. is to improve the health status of the people of Haiti through high-quality health care provided in a caring, compassionate and respectful manner, as a means of demonstrating God's love in this world and as a reflection of our faith in Jesus Christ.

### Friends for Health in Haiti is on the web!

- Regular updates on our blog.
- Photo gallery filled with photos of clinic site, patients, and life in Haiti.
- Donate online!

[FriendsForHealthInHaiti.org](http://FriendsForHealthInHaiti.org)

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## CHOLERA AND HAITI

October 2010 brought to Haiti a disease that hadn't been present in the country for over 50 years – cholera. It is a disease with high mortality, a disease that can cause epidemics quickly in countries with poor water and sanitation systems, a disease that has already killed over 4000 Haitians. Its introduction in Haiti was **a recipe for disaster**, with the country already struggling in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake of January 2010 and with over a million of its citizens still living in tent camps throughout the capital city of Port-au-Prince. Cholera began in the central part of the country with contamination of the Artibonite River. Hundreds, then thousands of cases were reported with dozens of deaths. We all held our breaths as the Haitian Public Health Department (MSPP) and other organizations rushed to control the spread of the disease. Every day we received reports from the UN and we were dismayed when we received news that cholera had reached Port-au-Prince. From there, it spread quickly to all other parts of the country. **The first case in the Grand'Anse**, which is the area in which Friends for Health in Haiti is based, was reported on November 17, 2010. Since then there have been a total of 13,074 cases out here, 9496 of which have been hospitalized. There have been 324 deaths in the hospital and 489 in the communities, with a fatality rate of 6.1%, one of the highest in the country.

What is being done about cholera here? The Haitian government and partner organizations have helped establish **Cholera Treatment Centers** in several towns, including Preville (a town up the mountain from our clinic), Latiboliere (a town halfway down the mountain from our clinic) and at the government hospital in Jérémie. It is in these centers that people with symptoms of diarrhea and vomiting are evaluated and treated. They are given oral rehydration solution or IV fluids, depending on their level of dehydration, as well as antibiotics.

We have treated **several mild cases of cholera in our clinic** and have distributed oral rehydration packets to our patients when needed. The most important intervention, however, has been patient education – telling patients how to prevent the disease with use of treated or potable water and hand washing with soap. They have been very receptive to the messages and we're hopeful that their fear of contracting the disease will motivate them to choose healthy behaviors. We are encouraging them to protect their water sources, most of which are uncapped and easily contaminated, and build and use latrines. Drinking clean water and taking proper care of human waste will help prevent not only cholera, but other diarrheal illnesses. We're hopeful that we can, in the future, help them bring some of these basic public health measures to their communities.

## GIFT FROM AGAPE FLIGHTS

We are thrilled to report that we recently received a grant from Agape Flights for funds to be used to purchase a used dump truck. This truck will be used to transport material to and from the clinic site once we start our construction and will help us save at least half the cost of materials. With the help of a truck driver-turned-pastor friend of ours, we found a truck to purchase and recently went to Port-au-Prince to see it. It's a 6-wheel dump truck with a Mack cab and it has been completely re-furbished and painted just for us! We'll go back to Port-au-Prince in a few weeks to complete the paperwork and it will be ours. Here it is in all its beauty....



## SHARING DIFFICULT DIAGNOSES



Solina Noel

In our clinic, we make it a practice to be forthright and tell patients what illness or disease we believe they have and explain whatever treatment options may be available, either in our clinic or other clinics or hospitals in the country. There are many diseases that require treatment that is not readily accessible here, especially for poor, rural peasant farmers and their families. Some of these include heart disease, renal failure, prostate problems and cancer. Telling patients that they have an incurable disease, such as cancer, or one where treatment is only available at great expense, is very difficult. Solina Noel came to our clinic recently with symptoms of uterine cancer. On examination, she had definite evidence of a tumor and referral to a surgeon in Jérémie resulted in the same conclusion: terminal uterine cancer, too advanced for surgery.

Both Cherlie and I took time in the clinic to talk with Solina about her diagnosis and encouraged her to make her heart right with her family and with the Lord. We prayed with her for strength and understanding in the days ahead. She accepted her diagnosis with grace and without a tear, confident that the Lord would accomplish his will in her life. We pray that all of our patients are as prepared to meet the Savior.



# HOSA BACKPACK PROJECT UPDATE

During the 2009-2010 school year, Friends for Health in Haiti was helped by Wisconsin high school students who were involved with a national student organization called HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America). The Wisconsin HOSA chapter chose FHH as their service project last year, putting together backpacks filled with school, personal and hygiene supplies for primary school children in Haiti. Each backpack contained the following items: pens, pencils, erasers, toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, wash cloth, nail clipper, comb, hair decorations for the girls, tennis shoes, underpants and socks. In addition, the students raised money to pay for shipping of the backpacks to Haiti.

Forty-one HOSA-affiliated schools in Wisconsin participated in the service project and at their annual leadership conference last April they presented FHH with 299 backpacks and over \$4000. We are glad to report that the backpacks made it safely to Haiti, after being taken by truck from Wisconsin to NY, where they were put in a shipping container and sent to Port-au-Prince. They were distributed to two primary schools near our clinic site in Gattineau. The first school is near the clinic and we were able to drive to it. Cherlie and I distributed the backpacks ourselves after giving a short health lesson to the students. Each student was measured for their tennis shoes and given underwear of an appropriate size. Here are photos from the backpack distribution:



The second school where we distributed the backpacks is an hour's walk from the clinic and there is no road that goes near the school. So, the school director, Pastor Felix, brought 12 students with him to the clinic and we put the backpacks into sacks and plastic bags that they carried on their heads back to school. Here is the sturdy group as they packed their sacks and took the packs back to their school:





# ROAD STORIES

Some of you may have read the blogs on our website regarding adverse experiences on the roads here in Haiti. Well, there is a major project underway to pave the road between the town of Les Cayes, on the southern coast of the southern peninsula, and Jérémie, which is on the northern coast. Between the two towns are mountains, mountains and more mountains, and the road has notoriously been one of the worst in the country, taking 6-7 hours to go about 65 miles. The road project has been in progress for over a year and there have been significant improvements already, thanks to dynamite and bulldozers. The trip to Les Cayes now takes about three hours. Here are some photos of the construction effort:



The road from Jérémie to Gâtineau is another story, since it is very rugged and parts of it frequently get washed out in times of heavy rain. In January there was a very heavy rain-fall and a section of the road washed out on both sides, leaving only a very narrow strip intact. There are deep ravines on each side of the road and when it's muddy and slick, we hold our breath and say a prayer as we pass through! Here is what it looks like:



The road damage has kept heavy trucks and equipment from going up the mountain, preventing us from being able to begin construction of our entry road onto the clinic site. We've been told that it will be repaired by the same crew that is working on the main road, so we're hoping they'll start work on it soon!

## Hope for Haiti

An event to benefit Friends for Health in Haiti, the 3rd annual Hope for Haiti banquet will be held on Saturday, April 16, 2011 at The Wisconsin Club, Milwaukee, WI. Cocktail Reception & Silent Auction begin @ 6pm. Dinner program & Live Auction begin @ 7:30pm.

For reservations contact us via phone or email (see right for contact info)

Friends For Health  
I N H A I T I



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