

# FRIENDS FOR HEALTH HEADLINES

FALL, 2008



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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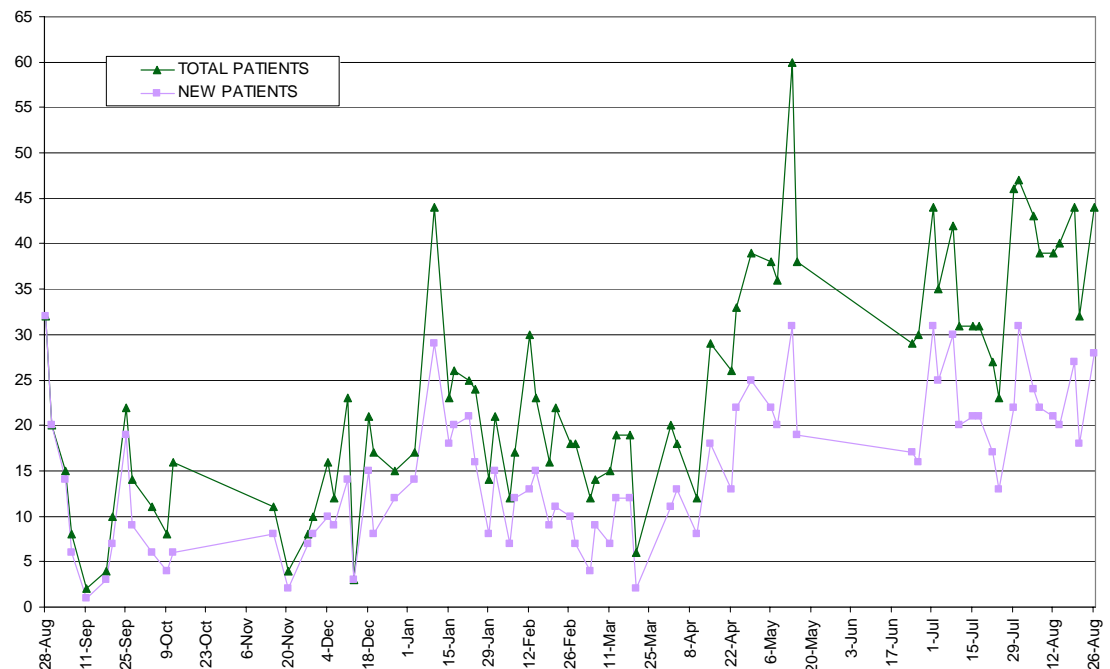
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## IT'S OUR ANNIVERSARY!

August 28<sup>th</sup> marked the anniversary of our first year of functioning as Centre de Sante de Gatineau. As we look back on the year, we realize how eventful it's been and how good the Lord is for bringing us through it. We've dealt with unhappy landowners who initially sold us land and then regretted their decision, came to judgment with disgruntled neighbors cutting down our trees and moving our boundary fences, struggled with local government officials who didn't like the price of our services, suffered the injustice of having lies spread about us by a former Haitian partner, tolerated back-breaking trips up and down the mountain twice a week, spent numerous hours setting up a supply chain for medications and supplies in country, and sweat through over a thousand patient consultations in a three room house with a tin roof and no running water or electricity. All in order to bring some much needed primary health care to grateful people who would otherwise not receive care. Much thanks to our faithful supporters for helping us get this far. In the past year, a total of 1783 patient consultations were performed, of which 1120 were new patients. This was accomplished with a staff of only two: Dr. Catherine Wolf and Cherie Severe RN. We are now at the maximum capacity we can handle (35-45 consultations per session), due to limitations of space and personnel.



Patients Seen at Each Clinic Session  
August 2007 - August 2008



# A TYPICAL CLINIC DAY

In our last newsletter, we gave you a photo tour of the clinic. Now, I'd like to describe to you the first few hours of a typical clinic day for us up in Gatineau.

## Opening the Clinic

We usually leave our house on the outskirts of town around 7:30am and drive into Jeremie, where we pick up our helper Ti Jean. We then drive up the mountain to the clinic, where we arrive around 8:45 or 9:00am. Patients are already there waiting for us, some having arrived as early as 5am, walking in the early hours of the morning to get there from localities far away. We unload our boxes of medications and supplies from the truck and organize them on tables in the three rooms of the house we use as a clinic. Then, we spend about 15 minutes talking with the patients, greeting them, explaining our procedures and policies and praying for the Lord's guidance and protection for us all. We never know what the day will bring, but we do know we have a friend to help us through it!

Many of the patients we see have high fevers, often related to malaria, typhoid fever or pneumonia, and we like to see them back in clinic within 2-3 days if the fever hasn't resolved. So, we give them a special follow-up visit without charge, and see them first thing in the morning, so that, if they're worse, they can be sent on down to the hospital for care. Fortunately, thus far, all have improved, although we've sometimes needed to prescribe additional medications for them.

## Follow-Up Care and More

On one clinic day this month, I saw 6 patients as quick follow-up visits. One of them was a little 2 year old boy with a large area of swelling behind his left ear. He had been on antibiotics for a few days, and now the swollen area was soft and fluctuant, indicating the presence of pus underneath. It had to be opened and drained, in order for it to heal. As I looked out at the benches full of patients waiting to be seen, I groaned, knowing that a procedure like this was going to put me behind for the rest of the day. But, in a situation where we are



Boy with scalp abscess



Mirlande, a 3 year old girl with a facial laceration.

the only health care providers in the area, we need to be ready for any eventuality. So, I gathered up all my supplies, had Cherlie and another helper hold the child for me, and, within about 10 minutes, the abscess was drained, packing in place and head bandaged up. There was no complaining from the patients to be seen, a tribute to the positive attitude that has been established in our little rural clinic. Little did they know that there would be more interruptions to come!

## Little Emergencies

I had just gotten through the first couple of patient consultations when a young man rushed into the yard, carrying a 3 year old girl. She had a large laceration above her left eye, and blood was trickling down her little face, mixed with her tears. She had apparently been gathering water from a nearby water source with her older sister, when the young man's mule knocked her down, causing her to hit her face on some rocks, causing the laceration. The young man carried her up to the clinic as the older sister went to get their mother. So, here stood a young man, without any money and anxious to get his produce to town to sell, and a tearful little girl, with a large laceration which needed repair. It took Cherlie several minutes of discussion to figure out exactly what had happened and who the little girl belonged to. In the meantime, her mother came and took the girl into her arms, waiting patiently for us to decide what to do with her. It was obvious that the laceration needed repair, and just as obvious that neither the young mule owner nor the mother were prepared to pay for it. So, we stopped our consultations again, with apologies to the waiting patients, and quickly repaired the little girl's cut, bandaging it up and telling the mother to return in two days for a follow-up visit.

As I returned to the regular patient consultations, I quietly prayed that there would be no further interruptions! And, there weren't. We finished up with 40 consultations, 6 follow-ups and the two procedures by 5:30pm, tired, but grateful for the opportunity to be of service to these people in such need of care.

# FAITHFUL PATIENTS

One of the medical conditions we see frequently among our patients is hypertension. As you can imagine, chronic problems are difficult to treat here in Haiti, because of limited access to health care and the expense of chronic medications. We encourage our patients with ongoing medical problems like hypertension, to come see us every month, because they can rarely afford to buy medications for longer periods of time. We also try to use generic medications that are available in Haiti, in order to keep the cost down. But, even with all our efforts, it's still a struggle to keep chronic medical problems under control. Bruno Belace is an exception, however. He first came to our clinic



Bruno Belace

last November, at which time his blood pressure was 200/120, which is very high. I prescribed several medications for him and he returned each month faithfully for follow-up. But, his blood

pressure remained elevated. In addition, he was having problems finding enough money to buy the medications each month. So, when a visiting cardiologist brought down some blood pressure medication samples in January, we found the perfect solution to Bruno's problems. I was able to give him the medications for free and, after several more months of faithful return visits and adjustments in his dosage, his blood pressure is now normal at 140/80. We're grateful for medication donations and for our faithful patients.

## SOFTENING HEARTS

"But God, in his wisdom, had other plans for Mr. D, and on a rainy day in March, we saw him waiting for a consultation from us."

Mr. D sold some of his land to us for our clinic in Gattineau. But, in the course of negotiations, he became embittered because he was unable to make the huge profit he thought he should get from a US-based organization. He told everyone in the community that he would never step foot in our "garbage" clinic. But, God, in his wisdom, had other plans for Mr. D, and on a rainy day in March, we saw him sitting there on the bench waiting for a consultation from us. We treated him very professionally, saw that he was very ill with pneumonia, prescribed and sold him antibiotics and other medications, and gave him careful instructions for home care and follow-up.

Although we didn't talk with him ourselves after that, we heard from neighbors that he improved quickly and all his symptoms resolved. He has since told other people that he's willing to sell us another piece of land that we need along the border of the road entering the clinic site. And, his son recently came to us for consultation as well. The Lord truly is softening hearts!

## APPEARANCES ARE IMPORTANT, OR ARE THEY?

Mr. Jean-Louis looked down at the floor as he told me his story. He smoked and drank and wasn't in good health. He wanted to go to a church near his home in order to pray and accept the Lord into his life, but..... He looked down at his shoes. "Do you see these?" he said. As he spoke, he moved his foot and the whole front of his shoe came apart, torn in two at the seam. "I can't go to church bare foot. And, if I can't go to church, I can't get converted," he said. So, I proceeded to explain to him that, even if people think they need to be dressed up to go to church, God doesn't care. He accepts us the way we are, because he looks at our heart, not our external appearance. Actually, he didn't need to go to church to pray to accept the Lord, he could do it right here. And pray we did, together in our clinic, with his torn shoes on his feet and worn hat on his head. It's the ministry we have here – improving health, changing lives.



Mr. Jean-Louis





# QUICK UPDATES BEFORE YOU GO...

## UPDATES FROM HAITI

- The **political situation** in Haiti has been stable lately. A new prime minister has been approved and the cabinet ministers are being changed. Once they are confirmed by Parliament, the government should be able to move forward.
- Funds have been given by Canada to **re-do the road** from Port-au-Prince to Jérémie. It is a huge project, and one that would help us tremendously in terms of transportation of materials during our construction.
- Cherie and Katie are in the process of completing construction on their house in Jérémie, to include **guest rooms for our visitors**. If you are skilled in carpentry or in laying ceramic tiles, we could use your help!
- Katie is presently working on the final edits for publication of the third edition of **"Handbook of Medicine in Developing Countries"**, which she co-authored with Dr. Dennis Palmer, a missionary physician in the Cameroon. The book expected to be completed in time for the Global Medical Missions Conference in Louisville KY, November 13-15. To learn more about the conference, check their website at [www.medicalmissions.com](http://www.medicalmissions.com). To order the new book edition, go to [www.cmda.org](http://www.cmda.org).



## UPDATES FROM THE HOME OFFICE

- Check out **our new blog**. Now you can read more frequent updates from Dr. Katie Wolf. Meet more neighbors and patients, learn how Haiti is recovering from the recent hurricanes, hear about project updates and more. Dr. Wolf sends updates to the office several times a month which are posted on our blog. The blog can be found via links on our website at [www.FriendsForHealthInHaiti.org](http://www.FriendsForHealthInHaiti.org), or directly at <http://friendsforhealthinhaiti.wordpress.com>
- If you would like to receive our **newsletters via email**, please let us know by signing up on our website or sending us an email at [friendsforhealth@gmail.com](mailto:friendsforhealth@gmail.com)



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I N H A I T I



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