



FRIENDS FOR HEALTH IN HAITI

HEADLINES

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

UPDATE FROM DR. WOLF IN HAITI

We are excited to share with you our latest news and updates from Haiti! In this newsletter, you will read about the global health elective which is offered to fourth year medical students at the Medical College of Wisconsin, the ways in which we are trying to improve patient care in our clinic in Gatteau, and the progress we are making in our Goat Program in communities near the clinic. We will also give you an update on our special projects and share ways that you can be involved in joining with us as we seek to improve health and live out our faith in Haiti.

AFFILIATION WITH THE MEDICAL COLLEGE OF WISCONSIN GIVES POSITIVE RESULTS!

For the past several years, I (Dr. Wolf) have been on the clinical faculty at the Medical College of Wisconsin, which is where I did my internal medicine residency. As such, we are a site for fourth year medical students to take a month-long global health elective. Last year, we had to cancel the students due to instability in the country, so we were thrilled to have Zoe Morgan with us for an elective rotation in February. She is planning to do her residency in medicine/pediatrics and is doing a “couple’s match” with her husband, Nathan, who is entering general surgery. Here are some thoughts from Zoe regarding her experience with us in Haiti:



Fourth year medical student Zoe Morgan providing patient care in our clinic in Gatteau.

“I learned a ton about Haitian culture and how to provide medical care with limited resources. I saw diseases I had only heard about and was very grateful to be welcomed warmly by staff and patients alike! Seeing the roads and tangible barriers to accomplishing goals like building latrines was invaluable.”
Zoe Morgan, Medical College of Wisconsin Student

We’re grateful for students like Zoe who choose to do medical school rotations with us here in Haiti. They help us out and we’re happy to share our work and our lives with them. All we ask from them is flexibility which was tested with Zoe when we ended up being without internet at our house the entire month she was here! We knew it was hard for her but she took it all in stride!

In addition to having medical students come work with us in our clinic, we also have a connection with the Department of Dermatology at MCW. When there are difficult dermatology patients for which I need some expert advice, I can take photos of their skin lesions, fill out an information form and send it to Dr. Steven Humphrey at MCW and he or one of the other dermatology faculty members will respond back in a few days with their advice. It has been very helpful for several of our patients and has led to better patient outcomes. Thanks to MCW for providing this innovative service to us!





REFLECTIONS FROM A CLINIC VOLUNTEER

Written by Zoe Morgan, 4th Year Medical Student at Medical College of Wisconsin

As a fourth-year medical student from Wisconsin, I was extremely nervous about coming to Haiti alone. Most of the news about Haiti that is easily accessible in the states is regarding political unrest and natural disasters. I knew there was more, but I had no clue what to expect. The first thing I learned was that Haitians are immensely proud of their country, and for good reason: the natural beauty is breathtaking, the people are fierce and wonderful, and their history is one to be remembered.

I knew I had chosen the right place for my global health rotation. Learning to provide medical care in Haiti was a challenge. I strove to find the balance between western medicine, traditional leaf healing, and the realities of Haitian life. I also worked hard to decipher medical conditions translated in language terms but not in meaning: “my eyes are hot” is a complaint I had never heard before. My clinical time was spent seeing patients, many with tropical diseases rarely seen in the US. These patients had often walked from 6-8 hours away and slept overnight outside on a bench in order to be seen. Many had not seen a doctor in years.

" **From a medical training perspective this was priceless..** ”
Zoe Morgan, Medical College of Wisconsin Student

From a medical training perspective this was priceless. I was surprised, however, to find how many disease processes and challenges patients face are exactly the same as those in the US. High blood pressure was a prime example: understanding the concept of treating a disease with no symptoms was a barrier here just as it is at home.

The clinic staff welcomed me, and our daily rides up and down the mountain exposed me to more of Haiti’s culture than I would ever have seen otherwise. I saw the school kids waving in the streets, the excitable toddlers with no pants waving from their front porches, and the random conversations with people on the side of the road. Those rides also showed me the reality of Haitian mountain roads after rain, the struggle to transport building supplies to upper terrains, and the realities of patients walking to our clinic for hours each way. I saw the goat programs and the latrines built by Friends for Health in Haiti, and met the many people whose lives were impacted for the better. The lasting changes implemented by this organization will continue to improve lives for years to come. Overall it was an incredibly valuable experience, and one that will influence my training for years to come.

12TH ANNUAL BANQUET Cancelled

Due to the evolving COVID-19 public health threat and guidance from the CDC on large event gatherings, today we announce that we have cancelled our 2020 FHH Annual Banquet which was scheduled to be held on April 25th at the Wisconsin Club in Milwaukee, WI. As this is our primary fundraising event of the year, it is a disappointment for us not to be able to share with our donors all that is happening with our ministry in Haiti. We are looking into other possible means to deliver elements of our banquet program, perhaps in a live-streaming format. Check our website for details and updates.





IMPROVING PATIENT CARE IN OUR CLINIC

It isn't often that we look to patients for suggestions in making our clinic function better. But, when a patient with hypertension suggested to me that we develop a way to make it easier for patients like her to get their medications re-filled, I took her seriously. So seriously, in fact, that we have now instituted a system where stable patients with hypertension can be seen without sitting on the benches and getting a number in the morning. They will be seen as follow-up patients by the nurses, after which I will see them and be sure they have the correct medications being prescribed. This way, they don't need to run the risk of being turned away without being seen. They can come in the morning, be seen right away, get their medications refilled and go home. Not only will this make more satisfied patients, we're hoping it will improve compliance and ensure good blood pressure control. After all, most of the elderly patients in Haiti who die do so because of cerebrovascular disease which is a direct result of uncontrolled hypertension. Thanks to our patient for making a great suggestion to improve our patient care!

CARING FOR GOATS IS A FAMILY AFFAIR

This February we welcomed Denver veterinarian Dr. Nancy Willerton, her husband Craig and their two Haitian-American sons Zeb and Zadie for a week-long visit. The whole family took part in vaccinating goats in our Goat Program, giving them medications for parasites and worms, trimming hoofs, tagging ears and playing with the babies! It was a very productive week and Dr. Nancy was able to examine all of the goats and care for any veterinary needs they had. In addition, she answered questions from the goat owners as well as the supervisors of the program and reinforced important management principles for our Community Coordinator, Gemi and vet tech Bruni. She was impressed with the good condition of the goats and found that they all appeared to be well cared for. Zeb and Zadie helped their mother with the goat care but they especially enjoyed getting up close and personal with the baby goats. Somehow, I feel that a goat farm may be coming to a homestead in Denver sometime soon!



Veterinarian Nancy Willerton with husband Craig and son Zeb prepare vaccines for the goats. Son Zadie is in the background on the right.



Zeb (L) and Zadie (R) enjoy holding baby goats.



MAKING PROGRESS IN OUR SPECIAL PROJECTS



Water & Sanitation

- The last of the funds from our Rotary Global Grant are being used to construct a total of 108 latrines in our original six Promoter Communities plus 35 latrines in a community near the clinic called Doudouche.
- We are also capping one more underground spring called “Sous Bawo”, which will supply hundreds of rural Haitians with clean water.
- Materials are being delivered to all the sites this month and we hope that construction will be completed by the end of April.
- Thanks to all the wonderful Rotary Clubs that contributed to our water and sanitation efforts!



Open-Air Spiritual & Community Center

- Construction has begun on our spiritual and community center and we expect the floor, concrete columns and beams to be completed this month.
- Thanks for your prayers for progress!



Footings are in place and the rock walls of the foundation are almost completed for the open-air spiritual and community center at Gatineau.



Goat Program

- See article in this newsletter



Diabetes Institute

- We continue to enroll new patients into our Diabetes Institute.
- It is definitely improving their compliance with medications and consultations and all the patients are very grateful for the financial assistance it provides.
- The program is keeping many patients out of abject poverty.



Education Program

- Schools in Haiti re-opened again in January after being closed due to the political instability and unrest.
- We are supporting 5 children in primary school, 2 in high school, 3 in university and 2 in medical school.
- All are doing well and we expect them to complete the school year with success.



Clinic Indigent Patient Fund

- There has been a drought lately in the communities around the clinic and many patients can't find enough food to eat, much less find money to buy their medications.
- We're helping the most indigent of our patients buy medications through our Indigent Patient Fund and we usually don't even let them know we are helping them!
- We want them to preserve their sense of dignity and worth in spite of their poverty.