

St Paul's Medical Mission 2007

The 3rd Medical Mission to Plen Mapou closed its doors on Friday afternoon March 9th after seeing a little over 1,000 medical patients and more than 100 dental patients in five days. That afternoon a team of three persons left the clinic to prepare for a short trip Saturday morning to St. John Baptiste, one of the outlying chapels of St. Isidore, accessible only by boat. It was the first time a team traveled to a chapel away from the clinic.



Fr. Antilus learning to take blood pressures at St. Jean Baptiste.

Huguette had her own outdoor office, shaded and protected by a woven-palm frond fence. We had brought two portable dental chairs from Anse-a-Galet and our two nursing students, Baretha and Evelyn were her assistants Monday through Thursday (their first hands-on patient care!); Bob Muller took over Friday, relying on skills he learned as a medic in the Army.



The first dentist to join the team, Dr. Huguette Duteau is native to Haiti, living in Sarasota

Much was accomplished during our visit this year. Prior to our arrival, improvements were made to the clinic building itself, including an indoor toilet and shower area. An outhouse was constructed while we were there to provide facilities for our patients, many who wait from the wee hours of the morning to be seen. Working with the community's leaders, plans were put in place to enclose the clinic grounds with a fence utilizing a "tools for work" kind of program that provides farmers of the area with tools to work their own land in return for doing needed work on the clinic grounds.



Plen Mapou Community workers

While all of this is needed and necessary, it was secondary to the goal of providing medical assistance to the people. The clinic opened Monday morning to a crowd of people, 180 had appointments that day, and we saw about 200, which was the case everyday. The days pass quickly and are over before you know it.



Fr. Antilus and Lou Pekrul taking much needed rest breaks

Tuesday morning brought our first medical emergency, a young girl with appendicitis. Surgery could not be done on the island and we had to send her to Port au Prince. Dr. Mark Morris and Jeremy Clark helped stabilize her with I.V. antibiotics before she was sent on a difficult trip down the mountain, by truck, and then by boat to the main island.



High blood pressure is a major issue on the island. This year, after developing a blood pressure program, Anne Richter trained six health workers to take blood pressure readings so the patients could be monitored after we left. St. Paul's provided each of them with tools for monitoring and recording results, along with medication to last the year. When the clinic is functional in two years Baretha and Evelyn will be on-site for monitoring the patients.



Donna Dugan and Jeremy Clark admitting patients with the help of Dominique and Makenson.

There was excitement Wednesday with the arrival of the child that was born at the clinic last year. What a good-looking, healthy child! Mother and son are doing quite well.



Anne Richter w/one year old Myson Ohnrus and mother.

There are more stories that the team members would be glad to share, but there are two in particular that help to answer the question of why we travel to Haiti to do this.

Early in the week we were asked to make a house call to a see a 70 year old woman who had fallen and broken her hip four weeks prior to our visit. She had been lying on a mat on her living room floor since the fall, tended to by her family and the local leaf doctor. Going with high hopes and good intentions, it was quite depressing to realize there was nothing that could be done. There are no orthopedic hip surgeons in Haiti and we could only pray that the joint would heal so that she could walk again.



Toni Hall (from St. Jerome parish) was a magnet to the children.

Friday brought an expectant mother to the clinic. She had walked an hour or so to get there and was having problems with the pregnancy. With happy memories of last year's birth at the clinic, it was quite sad to learn that the baby had died before being born. Along with Fr. Francois, a group of us prayed with the mother for the loss of her child before labor was induced. Though very difficult, it was an honor to witness the gentleness and strength of this young couple and the compassionate care of our medical team.

These two incidents point out how very blessed we are. Though not a guarantee, health care is readily available to us. Not so in Haiti. This Medical Mission of St. Paul's provides hope and the dream of health care in the area. Those hopes and dreams would not be possible without your generosity and prayers.



Donna Dugan, Mary Meza, Walt Davin, Harry Davin, Bob Muller, Anne Richter, Jeremy Clark, Mark Morris, Hugette Dutueau, Lou Pekrul, Peggy Pekrul, Toni Hall, Fr. Francois

**Many thanks to all who helped
make this possible!!**