



Haiti Health Initiative
PARTNERS PROMOTING HEALTH ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME

www.haitihealthinitiative.org

October 2011 Mission to Timo, Haiti Dental Report

INTRODUCTION

The need for quality dental care in rural Haiti is great. The people of Timo and the surrounding areas do not have regular access to dental treatment and preventative dental services for many reasons. Limited services, lack of money, and the inability to travel to access treatment all contribute to the problem. There are few dentists in Haiti and even fewer dental support personnel. Therefore, infection, lack of dental education, and poor overall preventative care is prevalent among the people of Timo.

The goals of our dental team were to eliminate dental pain and infection in patients through extractions or fillings, to educate all in proper oral hygiene, and to provide preventative treatments such as cleanings, sealants, and fluoride for as many people as time would allow.

REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES/RESULTS

Statistics:

- Dentists: 2; Dental Assistants: 2; Hygienists: 1
- Patients Treated: 301
- Extractions: 312
- Fillings: 171
- Sealants: 558
- Dental Cleanings: 50
- Fluoride Varnishes: 164
- Dental hygiene education: 1,520 (All dental and medical patients who came to the clinic receive oral hygiene education.)
- Full dental kits distributed: 150
- Individual items from kits distributed: 500

Our team attempted to streamline the triaging process to see as many patients as possible, though we still had to turn many away. For those whom we were able to see, we performed fillings, extractions, cleanings; applied sealants; and provided fluoride and preventative care education.

Community health worker uses a dental model to teach brushing and flossing.



FURTHER NEEDS

HHI is committed to improving and expanding its preventative care program, which currently includes sealants, dental cleaning, fluoride varnish, oral hygiene education, and providing hygiene supplies (such as toothbrush, paste, and floss). This education should also address contributing risk factors in diet such as the consumption of sugar cane and sugary drinks. This focus on prevention of dental decay and disease should be a priority of any group working with this population.



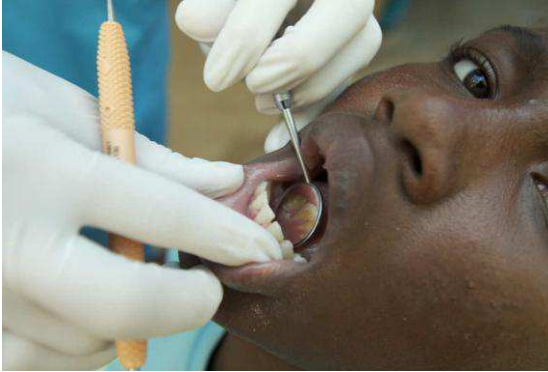
Patient uses a dental model to return demonstration after being taught proper brushing techniques.

Timo's water system was extensively repaired during HHI's October trip. The spring water which the repaired system taps was tested on the previous March trip and was found to be clean, safe, and naturally fluorinated. However, due to the high natural mineral content in the water, the people are prone to a heavier, more tenacious tartar build-up on their teeth which can cause periodontal disease. In turn, periodontal disease is linked to pre-term and low weight infants, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis. This concern must be addressed, with a focus on preventative care.

As previously stated, the team's greatest issue was the number of patients that could be seen during the time we were there. This meant limiting the overall amount of work we could perform on any given patient. Each patient treated needed a significant amount of dental intervention which often resulted in only partial treatment. Additionally, many patients created a dilemma by wanting fillings in their front teeth though the most pressing need may have been other more severely broken or infected teeth. While treating infection is more important for the patient's overall health, it is also important to allow each individual the ability to make his or her own health decisions.

Dental Cavities





RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOLUTIONS

HHI must continue working toward our goal that one day we may be mainly providing maintenance and teaching prevention rather than performing extractions and treating infections. We are also committed to addressing the lack of local dental care by providing scholarships for promising Haitians interested in dentistry and supporting positions. It is only through this endeavor that the dental landscape in Haiti can change sustainably from within.

To address the problem of care access in the future, we could have three dental units instead of two; that way, dentists can move from one chair to the next, which would allow others to administer fluoride and Novocain. If possible, adding a third dentist would be extremely helpful. In order to see more patients, the dentists must focus on the more acute problems of pain and infection, rather than attempting to administer total care. To further streamline the process and eliminate debate, we could discuss a limit on the number of teeth treated per visit, and if the patient wanted further treatment they would have to return later. Of course this is not a perfect solution, as there were a number of patients with severe problems in multiple teeth.

Dental cavity – before filling completed. Dental cavity – after filling completed.



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Matthew Cheney, DMD, MAGD:

“The humanitarian trip to Haiti was a wonderful way to provide dental care for a people with absolutely no access to dental care. It was wonderful to be able to rub shoulders with other health care professionals who care so much about helping others, and who give so freely of their talents and abilities. HHI is a great program with a vision that doesn't merely give out dental and medical care to the people of Haiti, but helps to educate and train them so they can one day be self-reliant. What a great opportunity to be part of a group that cares so much, and gives hope to the people of Timo.”

Matthew Cheney has 17 years of dental experience and currently owns a dental practice in Logan, Utah. This was his first trip to Timo with Haiti Health Initiative (HHI).

Monique Nault, Registered Dental Hygienist:

“I look upon these missions as an unbelievable opportunity in my life rather than a sacrifice to provide services to improve the quality of people’s lives who are denied access to health care, dental care and education. I feel more than fortunate to be able to make a difference for the people of Timo. I want people to know that others do care.”

Monique Nault is an extended practice dental hygienist with 23 years of experience. She currently works in a private practice and volunteers in an inner-city mission's dental facility addressing the dental hygiene needs of the homeless in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. This was her second mission to Timo with Haiti Health Initiative (HHI).

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