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SHINING A LIGHT ON HEALTH, PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNITY

**FALL  
2020**

# An Update on COVID-19 in Haiti

BY JAMES MORGAN, MD

**COVID-19 has not spared Haiti.** Still, its manifestation is different from what we have seen here in the U.S..

Globally to date there have been nearly 43 million cases, and 1.1 million confirmed COVID-19 deaths. In addition, there are other sequelae of the disease, such as persistent cardiac and pulmonary abnormalities, that seem less well understood. Since the first case in mid-March, Haiti has had over 9,000 confirmed cases and 231 deaths. While each case is indeed tragic, it's unclear why that number is as low as it is. Compare Dominican Republic, which shares the island with Haiti, and has over 124,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases and over 2200 deaths. This is despite that country's having approximately the same number of persons, close to 11 million; a land area nearly twice that of Haiti; and a relatively similar age distribution to that of Haiti. (For example 21% of the population is aged 15-24 years, as compared to about 19% in DR.)

So in Haiti, as in every other country, we are dealing with a unique set of knowns and unknowns.

Most physician colleagues in Haiti about COVID-19 have told me they feel the official numbers dramatically underestimate the real number of cases. Many clinics and facilities are not capable of performing COVID testing for patients with fever or other potentially telling signs, such as loss of taste or smell. There just are not enough reliable tests widely available.

In addition, there are societal obstacles that at times prevent ill persons from seeking care. For example, suppose I live in a small town, and develop fever from COVID-19, and I spread that to another local inhabitant. If I survive and my neighbor dies, it's not hard to see that I might soon be in a difficult spot with that

person's family, or with others in my community, and so there may pressure to not report my symptoms to anyone.



**Dr. Vilpigue with a young patient**

Cultural and societal dynamics mean health education has an outsized role to play in helping us to manage this disease.

At the Lamp Health Center, our staff continues to bravely confront this disease, as well as the many other consequences of poverty each day—malnutrition, cardiovascular disease, prenatal issues, asthma, infection, and many others. We do so through daily public health education at our health center, through local outreach with our community health workers, and certainly through our skilled professionals outfitted with appropriate therapeutics. As a community based organization, Lamp is also contending with increased hunger and malnutrition as the pandemic and inflation have deepened existing poverty. We have increased our aid accordingly. Children have lost months of learning as community schools were closed and for the first time we are seeing student drop outs in our education program, partially due to lost motivation and momentum, but also partially due to a need to help earn income for the family. These continue to be hard times in an already destitute place.

Each of you reading this today has been affected by COVID-19, and yet still you have chosen to show concern for those outside your immediate family. There's no doubt that the Lamp supporter is a special type of person! Thanks again for choosing to stay actively involved in this moment.

# Meeting rising patient needs at the Lamp Health Center

## COMING IN 2021:

TO CELEBRATE ITS 125TH ANNIVERSARY, the St. Cassian Roman Catholic Church of Montclair is fundraising to help Lamp build a dedicated nutrition center on the campus of the Lamp Health Center. Malnutrition is a widespread and growing problem among children, which is sometimes severe enough to be life-threatening. Lamp will now be able to expand its child nutrition program to this vulnerable, malnourished community. We are thrilled to partner on this life-saving project. **Thank you to all who donated!**

Schematic of the new nutrition center to be added to the Lamp campus

*Saint Cassian*  
PEDIATRIC HEALTH  
& NUTRITION CENTER

LAMP  HAITI

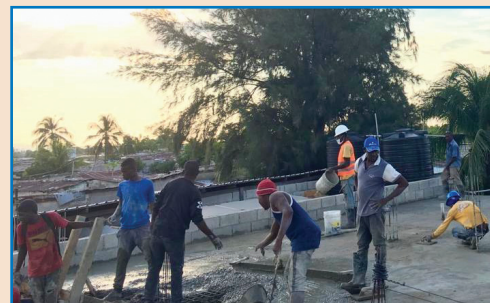
## LAB EXPANSION UNDERWAY

Lamp's in-house laboratory performs over 80 different tests for more than 7,000 patients each year, as part of high quality diagnosis and proper treatment. Infrastructure improvements from new construction will help us expand



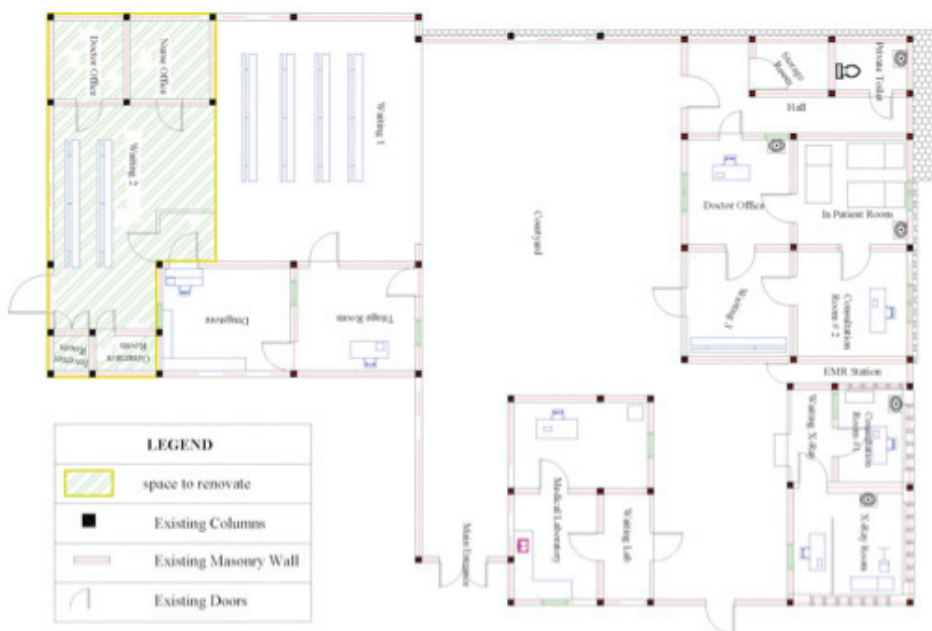
our services and improve our processes and quality control. Demolition and early stage reconstruction had been done before COVID-19 hit, and

then the work had to be put on hold as other priorities took precedence. As work begins again, the roof was recently added. As an added positive benefit, the construction hires completely local labor creating much needed jobs for local area residents. The number of tests performed on site are expected to be doubled using upgraded testing methods and equipment.



## SCHOOLS REOPEN

The 2019-20 school year was significantly disrupted by COVID-19's school closures. Virtual learning was not possible in the poor community of Cité Soleil, so learning time was lost. The good news is that the government has announced that schools will reopen in November for the start of the 2020-21 academic year. We will soon be reaching out to our educational sponsors with more details.



*Health  
& Hope*

# Lamp's First Virtual Gala Was a Success!



**In response to the times,** Lamp for Haiti broadcasted its first virtual fundraiser online on September 24th. The meaningful program included inspiring speeches, talented musical performers, and a virtual tour of the Lamp Health Center narrated by Daniel Tillias, a Lamp Board member and CNN hero from Haiti.



Thanks to generous sponsors and supporters like you, we raised \$75,000 to support quality medical care in Haiti. This will energize our operations in a difficult year.

Thank you to all the silent auction item donors and all the winning bidders. Thank you to Eugene Flinn for leading the virtual fund-the-mission appeal and to all the donors. Thank you to our entertainment – students from Haiti and Montclair High School and to Bonga, our Haitian drummer

performer. Special thanks to our volunteer event committee and to Mike Sweeney whose talents brought the vision to life via video. Everything came together for a successful event and now the funds go to Haiti to provide for meaningful medical care. We are grateful to the sponsors, donors and volunteers that made the evening a success! **THANK YOU!**

*Did you miss the 2020 Gala? You can see it on our website!*  
**<https://lampforhaiti.org/health-hope-gala>**

## Basketball tournament pivots to trivia to raise funds for families in Haiti

**On August 30th,** Regis High School student Toby Baer led a spirited and entertaining family feud-style trivia tournament online, instead of his usual in person Hoops for Haiti basketball tournament. Toby has raised money for Lamp for Haiti consistently over the last five years and he didn't let the virus stop him in this year of great need. With Toby's lead, participants and donors helped to raise over \$3000!

**Thank you for making a difference!**



**We give thanks  
for your support  
and wish you and  
your family a  
Happy Thanksgiving!**





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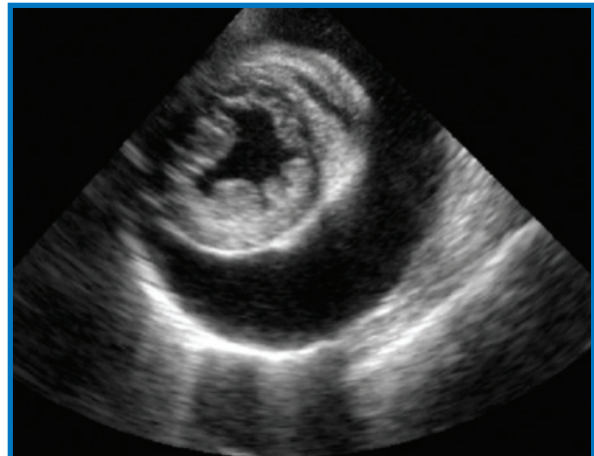
# Saving Wilson

**BY BARRERE HYPOLITE, MD**

MEDICAL DIRECTOR AT THE LAMP HEALTH CENTER

**Wilson Dessources**, 32 years of age, came to the Lamp Health Center with a cough, fever, dark urine, a headache, some thoracic pain and pain around his stomach, and recent weight loss. He reported no history of tuberculosis or known exposure to it. At first glance, it seemed to be an uncomplicated case but I followed my instincts for a more thorough investigation. A chest x-ray was taken and I performed an ultrasound around his stomach, between his thorax and his belly, and there I discovered an enormous quantity of liquid surrounding his heart. The culprit of his malaise was extrapulmonary tuberculosis (a tuberculosis infection outside the lungs where we find it in nearly 80% of all cases). This can lead to a fatal condition named cardiac tamponade, where the fluid puts pressure on the heart and stops the pumping of blood to the body. This finding literally changed the course of Wilson's life. He had sought medical attention elsewhere but received no helpful

diagnosis. Luckily, then he came to the Lamp. Wilson was counseled and referred to the high level hospital where surgery will relieve the fluid and he will begin a treatment for tuberculosis. Residents in our neighborhood say, "*Se nan ti LAMP nou prale, nou ka jwenn solisyon*" which means that Lamp is a place to find solutions. It is always a miracle to save a life. This is part of my blessing working at Lamp where my mission is to walk alongside my patients and help ensure their health.



**This is an example of extrapulmonary tuberculosis, showing fluid collecting around the heart, squeezing it and preventing it from pumping blood normally. Without treatment, the patient dies.**