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LAMP for HAITI

SHINING A LIGHT ON HEALTH, PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNITY

SUMMER

2023

SHINING A LIGHT ON HEALTH!

Hypertension: a Major Scourge in Haiti

A mantra oft repeated at Lamp for Haiti is that we aim to provide quality, cost effective healthcare to some of the world's poorest. Our focus is on people living in the huge, notorious urban ghetto called Cité Soleil, and we want to have the biggest impact for dollars spent. We focus on primary care.

One condition that we treat daily is high blood pressure, also called hypertension. This common ailment causes a lot of problems, like congestive heart failure, heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, blindness, and adverse maternal and newborn outcomes in pregnancy. Hypertension is relatively straightforward to diagnose. Treatment requires education, behavior and dietary changes, and medication.

Consider just a few facts about our patient population:

- Of the roughly 3 million residents of Port-au-Prince, about 10% of the population lives in Cité Soleil, a sprawling slum with little to no electricity, significant food insecurity, and severely limited access to drugs to treat common health conditions. About 70% of the urban population in the capital lives in its slums.
- Hypertension is the leading cause of preventable death in Haiti. Cardiovascular complications overall are the number one cause of death in Haiti.
- Haiti has seen, especially among women, some of the world's highest prevalence rates of hypertension in the last 30 years.
- Almost 1/3 of all adults in Port-au-Prince have hypertension.
- Less than 15% of persons with high blood pressure in Haiti have it in good control. (Limited access to treatment is the main reason.)
- Hypertensive complications in pregnancy are linked with high stillborn rates, low birth weights, preterm births, and maternal death. Maternal mortality rates in Haiti are nearly 25 times those in the US, and among the highest in the world!

This past May, US Olympic track star Tori Bowie died tragically in her 8th month of pregnancy at her home in Florida from complications of eclampsia. (Eclampsia is a severe condition in pregnancy related to blood pressure, leading to kidney problems, seizures and fetal and maternal death.) US news outlets appropriately carried reports of her death at age 32, and stories about this aspect of hypertension. In our work in Haiti, we see similar tragedies with agonizing regularity. Strokes in new mothers and grandmothers, kidney failure, heart failure and trouble breathing, severe vascular complications in the legs, etc. Many of these would be prevented or mitigated with even modest blood pressure control.

The way out of this morass is not to stop at public health data and allow ourselves to be paralyzed by its glaring challenge. Organized, creative, effective steps, working with partner organizations (both community and medical) as well as the public health sector has been a cornerstone of our approach to many other vexing problems, and will continue to serve as the roadmap to building a stronger community.




Nurse Ricard Samson at mobile clinic triage

MOBILE CLINICS EXTEND THE CARE



Women and children always make up the large majority of patients

In March, Lamp made the decision to greatly extend our mobile clinic program. Access to the health center in Bwa Nèf, Cité Soleil, was being impeded by conflicts between rival gangs, and we knew that the need for medical care was enormous throughout the city, and especially in low-income communities, due to the closure of virtually all government-run services. It was however a kind of experiment, since we would be setting up clinics in many locations that we had not previously visited.

Our very intrepid staff were up to the challenge. We have been holding mobile clinics every week since the beginning of April, more than 200 patients, we have provided care and treatment for over 4,000 people through this program, in the middle of a very chaotic and troublesome period.



Nutrition clinic at our new partner Haiti Communiterie

The mobile clinic program has taken full advantage of the government's Community Health Worker network. When a location is selected, our staff make contact with the local CHWs, who do the critical task of alerting their community to the upcoming event, often by walking through the streets with a megaphone. They are also present at the clinic, assisting with practical tasks and responding to the questions and concerns of the community members. These CHWs have typically not been paid for months (sometimes years), so that the stipend we provide is very much appreciated.

Mobile clinics are a major exercise in logistics. It is taken for granted that the demand will exceed the supply, so that we typically hire three or four additional doctors for each clinic, plus additional supporting staff.

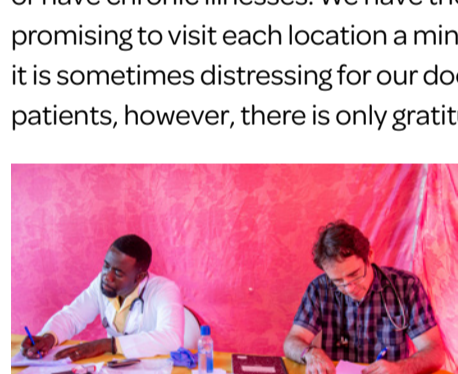
Note that mobile clinics are not an ideal way to provide health care since it is difficult to follow up with patients that require additional treatment or have chronic illnesses. We have tried to mitigate this deficiency by promising to visit each location a minimum of three times. Nevertheless, it is sometimes distressing for our doctors to encounter patients who clearly need more than we can give. On the side of the patients, however, there is only gratitude.



Mobile clinic waiting area, in March



Lamp uses at least 5 doctors at each mobile clinic, due to overwhelming demand



Doctors Metellus and Morgan at mobile clinic in July

A key finding of this experiment in extended care is simply that it costs a lot. Temporary staff are additional to our normal expenses and, most importantly, expenses for medicine are many times our normal levels. This is due to the fact that patients present with serious illnesses, and are given full courses of medication since it is understood that we will not be able to offer continuing care. Also, lab work must be done with much more costly rapid tests since all diagnosis and treatment must occur on the same day.

Lamp's mobile clinic program has been a tremendous success. It is a method of providing care that is not optimal but that responds to the enormous need for medical services in the direct way that we hoped for, but could not depend on. As a result of the mobile clinic program we have found a partner and an ideal location from which to provide daily long-term care to residents of Cité Soleil even when our own health center is inaccessible. The arrangement has not been finalized but if it goes forward it will be a very significant - and exciting! - move forward. We will catch you up in our next newsletter!

COUNTRY UPDATE:

HAITI IN 2023

Haiti has received an unusual amount of media coverage of late due to the political situation and the troubling activities of gangs in the capital city. This article, then, is meant to show how Lamp has been affected and comment on its efforts to provide care in a volatile environment.

The first thing that can be mentioned is that life, in most of the country, continues more or less as normal. Prices of many goods have risen dramatically (the economy is at a standstill) but people are able to go about their activities without threat. In Port-au-Prince, however, the situation is very dire. Here too, people go about their activities - working, shopping for food, buying and selling - but only because they must. Perhaps 90% of the city is in the control of various gangs, and their activities, such as kidnapping and robbery, place a layer of threat on the most ordinary of activities. Nevertheless, Lamp staff continue to buy medicines and supplies and move about the city as need to provide medical care.

Unfortunately, the threat is even more pronounced in Cité Soleil - where the Lamp for Haiti Health Center is located - due to an ongoing conflict between rival gangs. Currently a ceasefire is allowing us to continue services there but there have been long stretches over the last year in which our staff have been unable to enter.

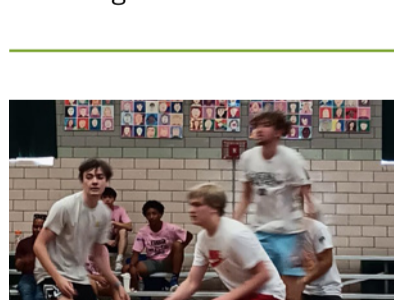
Lamp's first response to this lack of access was to organize ourselves to provide mobile clinics in areas close to Cité Soleil. That major effort is described elsewhere in this newsletter.

We also moved our child nutrition program to a new location, providing transportation stipends so that parents could reach the new location. As one might imagine, the collapse of the economy has hit the poorest the hardest. Thousands of children are suffering from malnutrition and its related health concerns.

Finally, we have decided to move ahead with a second site from which to provide regular, daily health care. This decision is risky, since it depends on you, our supporters, to underpin our efforts. However, the need for medical care is tremendous and we have been lucky enough to find an ideal location for this step forward. The arrangement is not fully in place but we plan to rent space from our new partner, Haiti Communiterie, in an area just outside of Cité Soleil. We are currently operating our nutrition program from this site and would love to provide regular services there even if we are able to continue daily operations at our health center in Cité Soleil. That is, despite a very fraught environment, Lamp is not only continuing to assist the poorest, but hopes to take a long-awaited step to establish a second health care center - assisting more people will there will be budgetary implications - assisting more people will demand additional resources - but when one views the problem from the perspective of the poor there could not be a better time to increase services. The suffering that the current chaos has caused is enormous. We have pledged to be present for this community so let us be true to that promise.

FUNDRAISING UPDATES:

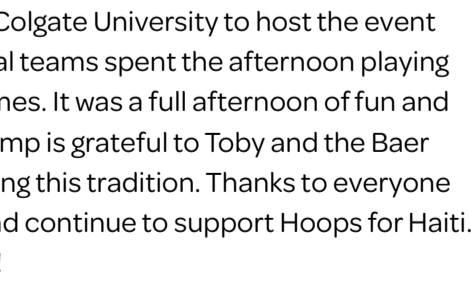
The Summit Avenue Concert returned this year with a perfect evening of music, friendship, and fun. On June 3, the Shapiro family hosted neighbors, families, and friends of the Lamp. School of Rock, Montclair High School, and other local performing artists serenaded and kept the crowd moving with pop sounds from 70s, 80s, and 90s. Rising sophomore Rebecca Shapiro organized the event, persuading others to come out, all in support of Lamp for Haiti. Not only was the evening fun, but it was a successful fundraiser. Thank you to all the artists for their performances, to everyone who came out to support the Lamp, and a huge thank you to Rebecca and her family for breathing life back into the Summit Avenue Concert.



The Baer family

came together to host again for its 7th year Hoops for Haiti at St. Cassian. Toby Baer, who started Hoops when he was in the 6th grade, returned from finishing his freshman year at Colgate University to host the event once again. Several teams spent the afternoon playing three on three games. It was a full afternoon of fun and basketball. The Lamp is grateful to Toby and the Baer family for continuing this tradition. Thanks to everyone who supported and continue to support Hoops for Haiti. See you next year!

The Lamp for Haiti summer events culminated with a fundraiser on Friday, August 18, at **Montclair Brewery**. The weather was great and provided the perfect setting to close out our summer fundraising events. Water Street charmed the crowd with its eclectic sounds mixing pop with pop, and a dash of funk. Chef Jose kept us happy with mouthwatering lite bites including individual macaroni and cheese bowls, sirlion bruschetta, and more. We were honored to have in attendance several of our dedicated Lamp supporters. We also made new friendships whose support we hope will continue.



Thank you to everyone who supported our summer events. We can't wait until next year to do it all over again!



SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR ANNUAL FALL GALA!

Friday, November 10th, 2023 at 6:00PM at the Woman's Club of Upper Montclair