

Dame-Marie: February 2017

Our return to Dame-Marie was filled with some anxiety about the physical conditions and the state of recovery from Hurricane Matthew, as well as the health of our Sisters and Brothers in this fishing community. But, of course, first we had to travel those difficult hours on the bus. The final part of the 10-hour bus ride entails traversing mountains in endless switchbacks and I always count off in my head the six peaks that are in our way before the sea beckons.



Mountain peaks
along the journey to Dame-Marie



Village of Dame-Marie
and Caribbean Sea in background

I have stood on the mountainside where this image was taken just outside Dame-Marie looking back on our journey. It does give credence to the legend that Haiti is a land of mystery and wonder.

However, the reality of crossing over those peaks means that the roads are very difficult. The road is rutted volcanic rock with no base and there have been no repairs done since the hurricane. So the two flat tires along the way were not unexpected.



Second stop along the way
to replace a flat tire



Local fauna

But these stops allowed us to see some of the local fauna that is re-growing and testifying to the fact that the countryside will heal again. And even better, these repairs allowed us to visit with some children who came over to see what was happening. Through one of our Haitian travelers, we found that the young man in the gray shirt wants to be a doctor.



(L-R) Donna Denault and Beth Howard (right) with local village children



?Future doctor?

MATH Mission Progressing in Dame-Marie

This trip marked a major achievement for our program and for the community of Dame-Marie. For the first time, we had a 50-50 mix of Haitian and US doctors and nurses serving together on our team. The mission of Medical Aid to Haiti (MATH) is Helping Haitians Heal Haitians, and this trip was a testament to that philosophy. So here are the team members of our trip –

Anesthesia



(L-R) Dr. Benoucheca Pierre, Dr. Clark O'Brien and Dr. Esther Antoine-Dardignac

Surgeons



(L-R) Dr. Michael E. Bourque (OB-GYN), Dr. Patrick Charlorin (General Surgery), Dr. Joseph Glavylove (OB-GYN), Dr. Djovensky Mathurin (General Surgery)

OR Nurses



(L-R) Jean O'Neil CRNA, Linda Riccio RN, Marie France RN, Donna Denault RN and Kathy Aries RN

Pre-Op



Beth Howard RN

Post-Op and Pharmacy



(L-R) Fabiola Mathurin RN and Kathryn Pember RN



(L-R) Tabeteau Marie Thatcher RN, Maggie Levasseur RN and Fabiola Mathurin RN

A total of 23 surgeries and 6 local procedures were performed and this trip was very dramatic for the emergencies faced in the obstetrical area. Two young women were brought in having seizures from eclampsia. Their blood pressures were dangerously elevated and they both faced death along with their babies if delivery could not be accomplished quickly. The team stabilized them and both had emergency C-sections. Success is measured by the faces of the staff, who took care of them, as well as the cries of new life in Dame-Marie.



Mother and son



(L-R) Kathryn Pember RN and Marie France RN holding twin boys A and B



Our Delivery Room nursing specialists, Kathy Aries RN and Kathryn Pember RN, were in their element teaching needed skills for nursing and bonding

Stories from Dame-Marie – February 2017

And once again, skilled post-op nursing was available from both Haitian and Americans, as well as from the family, even siblings, who are essential to the patient's recovery.



(L-R) Patient, Dr. O'Brien, Kathryn Pember RN and Tabeteau Marie Thatcher RN



Veteran team member Maggie Levasseur RN with patient, his mother and siblings

Dr. Cliff Wagner, ER doctor extraordinaire, managed to triage over 300 patients that presented to the hospital during the week allowing the rest of the team to be more efficient in the needed surgical tasks.



(L-R) Dr. Cliff Wagner and his interpreter, Lux Alexis.

Our eyeglass clinic was an overwhelming success with a waiting line extending the breadth of the operating suite and over 150 reading glasses distributed.

Patients and Surgeries

Running a surgical service involves a certain amount of discomfort to our patients, and, sometimes, it is difficult to ease the suffering of a patient (left photo below) when there is a language barrier, even though we have interpreters. The reward will be when her family brings her back in May when we return and get to see her bright smile without the large growth on her face.



Another young women (patient in right photo above) lived with two large orange-sized tumors on her upper chest for 17 years. Her pre-op images showed terror in her eyes from fear, but all we will remember is her smile and thanks the day after when she returned for a post-op check. Now she can lie on her stomach, a position we all take for granted. Thank you Dr. Djovensky and Dr. Patrick, our Haitian surgeons, for your superior skills helping your people.

And the difference between winning and losing a patient under these conditions exists on a razor's edge. Several times it was God's helping hand or grace that I believe made the difference in coming out with the patient doing well.



Hospital Update

Dame-Marie has the only working Delivery and Operating Room in the western portion of Haiti. The only other facility is the Cuban hospital, an hour's drive away but unfortunately, still out of commission from hurricane damage.

Another milestone achieved by Pierre Antoine and his staff was finding funds to hire a Haitian anesthesiologist and an OB-GYN physician that has staffed the OR to perform C-sections for 3 of 4 weeks per month since October 2016. Twenty (2) mothers are alive and well, along with their babies, who had C-sections when we were not there. Many of them would not have survived or would have been damaged without the skills of the small Haitian staff that worked true miracles with very little equipment and support.



Mother, who delivered just before our arrival, with her healthy infant

However, the funding ends this month, March, and that is another reason I write these summaries – to ask each of you who read this to consider supporting MATH and our commitment to help Haitians heal Haitians.

As word is getting out into the surrounding communities, the volume of obstetrical care is growing.



(L-R) Anne D'Orvilliers and Dr. Michael Bourque visiting maternity clinic



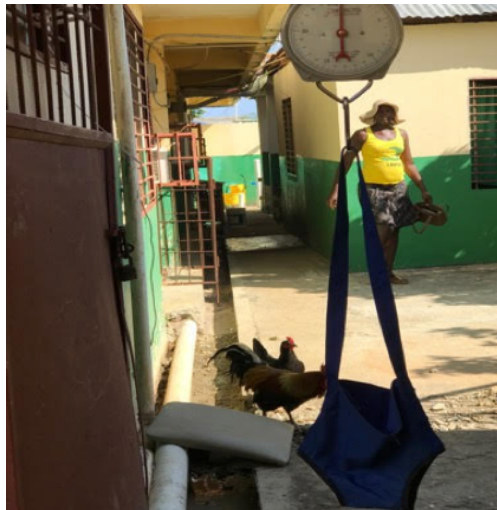
Dr. Joseph Glavylove shows a mother an ultrasound image of her baby

Due to our continued service to this community entering its fifth year, our hospital administrator and benefactor, Mr. Pierre Antoine, also has been able to get funding to renovate and furnish with cribs an area for a new pediatric ward. When I asked him how he can get money when there is none, he smiles and says, “You just have to be able to get blood from a stone”. I now call him Saint Pierre.



Newly renovated pediatric ward

I doubt you will ever see an open-air pediatric clinic in the US, but in Dame-Marie you will see many, once in a lifetime sights.



Outpatient pediatric scale complete with visiting chickens

Why We Do What We Do

The moments that make a missionary thank God for being allowed the privilege and opportunity to help with the greater world can be seen in these photographs. These are the memories that will be remembered forever by those of us who witness these interactions.



Elizabeth (Beth) Howard RN getting some quiet one-on-one time with a baby in the ward -- Can you see the special light of grace being a halo enveloping these two



Minnie Mouse is alive and well in Dame-Marie with a coloring book donated to a young Haitian student by Kathryn Pember RN

In and outside the hospital, good will continued with our team interacting with the local community members on our daily walk to the hospital.



Local village children with Dr. Wagner

But all is not high fives when we are the only resource for an entire community of 40,000. Dr. Wagner told me the chief complaint of more than one patient was that they didn't have anything to eat, and our gift of nutrient bars or monies are a fix for only a few hours.

The following link -- <https://youtu.be/w6f7-A86uW0> -- goes to a video put together by the Antoine Family Foundation showing the devastation that Hurricane Matthew dealt to the western third of Haiti.

In closing, I hope you once again have seen how skilled medical and non-medical personnel, not American or Haitian, but just regular people with exceptional hearts can come together for the first time and work miracles. We are growing in reputation among the Haitian government and local communities, but our requirements of supporting our Haitian counterparts in our Dame-Marie and Port-au-Prince projects are growing as well. I would ask each of you who cannot commit their skills or time to make a donation to MATH in support of one or both of our projects.

The future is bright with your support and the greatest light we shine is the light of hope that there is a future where there will be clean water, electricity and enough food. We are well on our way to making a start for better health for our Sisters and Brothers in Dame-Marie.

God Bless,

Michael R. Bourque MD

Medical Director for MATH Dame-Marie

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