

# Dr. Shetlin's Memoirs of



Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup> 2009

Friday afternoon myself, Jen, Kirsten, and Rebecca (Emergency nurses) arrived at the Haiti international airport. On approach the view from the window was that of a lush green island where banana trees, coconut trees and sugar cane were everywhere. Coming in lower over the water and reaching the runway shanty shack made of small cement walls and tin roof (scrap sheets of tin roofs with rock on top to hold the tin down) were innumerable and everywhere. Of course, they were mixed in with other larger structures. The airport was a small concrete building. The large Delta Jet pulled up to a stop on the tarmac to a stop. The doors opened and we walked down a set of roller stairs and into the cement building. We were met just inside the building with a band (really good) that played for donations like I have seen in so many other countries in subways and on the streets.

Once through customs Lisa B. (ER nurse administrator at IHC and HHH 'Team Utah' team leader) was waiting for us in baggage claim. Since her flight had arrived hours before us she had to bribe (literally) her way back into the airport to meet us. We loaded up and followed her out of the airport. She warned us there are guys outside that are very persistent in wanting to carry our bags to our transport because they make their living off the tips of individuals for this service. "Just tell them no," she said. Seconds after exiting the building a small mob of men grabbed at our bags each politely but forcefully trying to pull bags off our shoulders out of our hands. Try as we might we couldn't keep them from taking half our luggage and thus we had to tip them at our vehicle.

Driving through downtown from the airport to the clinic was somewhat how I expected it...crazy driving similar to Korea only



much more intense and less safe and sanitary. Like Korea the driving rules seem to dictate he/she with their bumper 'first' wins right of way. Small Toyota trucks with custom welding jobs made the shell on the back elevated just for people to sit on the metal welded bench seats. People would cram in, on top, or hold on the back as these little trucks acted as busses they carried clearly too many people per vehicle through the muggy and dusty streets of Port Au Prince.



As I expected, again similar to my former experiences in Korea there were open markets all along the main streets. What I didn't expect was the food markets being set up next to huge piles of garbage. The refuge in the streets is unbelievable. Traffic was very "stop and go" since school had just gotten out and there were simply a great number of people trying to get to different places. Pedestrians, pigs, chickens, motorcycles, cars, "taptap" (those makeshift public transportation) swarmed the streets literally in every direction. Horns were honked constantly, used as a "hello," or "hey, I am here," rather than a "move it jerk" like in the States.



Once to the clinic and house where we are staying it was clear we are in the lap of luxury compared to most and it wasn't really that luxurious. The house was a large 3 level concrete building currently set up to sleep about 30 medical team members. The windows either have a metal lattice or 4 inch wooden leveler type blinds...but no glass. The only difference from inside and outside is having a roof up top. Very open structures as far as climate control. I was pleased to find that we had running water (very low pressure and not drinkable) and electricity. I was told we only had electricity maybe 3 hours per day but it was more pretty steady. Few homes in Haiti have power at all. The power plant downtown actually runs on Diesel fuel. This house has 20 car batteries and a generator but it seems to me it is not running off of those.

The clinic was a humble structure. Three or four stories tall but awkwardly assembled in how the hallways and rooms flow. It serves a great function and is a wonderful facility for the country. Lisa and the founding workers on "**Healing Hands for Haiti**" have done a fantastic job building up rehabilitation in a country that has none. With minimal medical and surgical facilities and third world streets and transportation, for someone who is handicap mobility is a near impossibility. After a tour of the clinic, the PT area and the prosthetic shop we met the staff. I am excited to work with them on Monday.



Touring more of the grounds that were donated for the “Healing Hands” project we were down in a large deserted building that belonged to the men who use to own the grounds and sold it to the individual who purchased it for the project. His grave is still down by his 4 story house that is now vacant and crumbling. That was part of the deal that his grave stays. Once funds are raised the house will come down and a hospital will be built. Anyway, while climbing through the ruins of this old house, just to the east was a stream and on the other side a shanty town of tiny homes (rooms really) built practically on top of each other with their tin roofs. Suddenly there was a cloud burst and the stream began to fill. Pigs and half naked kids (some fully naked) began playing in the stream. A few minutes later there was a noise and a wave like a small sunami came rushing down the stream just full of garbage and plastic bottles. (I am sure all the kids got out of the way in time or it may have swept them down. We headed back up to the house and could not get dry the rest of the night.



Sleeping on a bed with a mosquito net was interesting. Thank heavens there was a fan in the room. The temperature and humidity was just where it was difficult to fall asleep and even the sheer cover of a mosquito net seemed to be the difference between comfort and too hot. Between malaria and a little night sweat, I decided to stick with the net.

Once asleep I was up early. I love summer mornings anyway but the sun is up around 5 and goes down around 6pm...no morning run (several reasons).

### **Saturday – September 19, 2009**

The team packed up for a day trip to a village just 15 to 30 miles away. However, with traffic and the roads it was a two hour trip.

With two 15 seat vans full of us and all the medical supplies we could carry (worm medicine, Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Tums, blood-pressure meds and of course, a portable chiropractic table) we started our journey. We picked up 4 translators and 3 Haitian MD's who volunteered to help us.

The further in the country we got the more I enjoyed the environment. Oddly, every few miles or so there were vehicles broken down and stripped. Or a crashed vehicle just pushed to the side of the road and left. It looked like something from Mel Gibson's "Road Warrior" only with a lush green backdrop ☺

We were not aware, other than the city, of where we would be going. Last year they set up someplace outside with a few tables and a line of over 400 people (300 kids)

and it was pretty chaotic. To our surprise, this year the Haitian coordinator for the “healing hands” met a woman who was able to set up the use of a village church building for the day. So we pull up to this little LDS church near the ocean in this little village and it made for the perfect clinic setting. The relief society room was the waiting room, and nurses set up triage stations to check vitals and take a history then sent patients to one of us four doctors each in a private room. The kitchen served as the pharmacy.



The village Pharmacy

It was good to use the ‘ol diagnostic skills again to their fullest rather than the typical chiropractic complaints and wellness care I have primarily seen for the last 10+ years. We saw patients with you name it...typhoid, diabetes, prenatal checkups, leprosy, stroke victims, high blood-pressure, amputees, worms...everything you could think of. Many came in with handmade crutches or a loved one brought them in wheel barrel. Many we could help, some we couldn't.



Patient with diabetes and leprosy.

The worst part is there simply is no follow-up, it was a one day shot. The HHH clinic in Port Au Prince is not that way but many people won't travel to the city.

Most everyone that saw me was adjusted as well. One little old gal (none of them know how old they really are- I wouldn't either if I lived in a village with no power, no printed calendar and no clock). She had shoulder pain and limited range of motion in her right shoulder. The best think I could do for here was chiropractic. After some Active Release (soft tissue work) and adjusting her neck and shoulder she walked out of the room with over 80% improved movement and no pain. The Trauma/ER nurse that was working with me knew nothing of chiropractic... she was amazed to see how it works. It always amazes me too! I love being a chiropractor...just help the body help itself.

A patient with upset stomach and acid reflux came in so I explained why we wanted to adjust the middle and upper back to help the nerves from this part of the spine to the stomach. I adjusted him and we gave him a few Tums. I knew those wouldn't last so I suggested when they run out use Papaya as an anti-acid since that is readily available

to him in this part of the world. My nurse was surprised again one with the chiropractic and two with the thought of something natural and available here to help with the same thing. Western medicine is not the answer to everything, especially to those who can't get it.

The entire clinic experience was life changing. The team worked very well together and the lives we touched, even for just an afternoon, made it every bit worth the trip down here...and we still have more than a week left.

After the crazy drive back to the house we all cooled off in the pool. A life saver to say the least!

Once dried off we met in the team room for our end of day sound-off. We go around and ask what each person's best and worst thing of the day. Before we got started the conversation turned to Chiropractic. With an audience of Nurses from a variety of backgrounds from ER to Infant Intensive Care I spent the next hour explaining chiropractic and adjusting 14 of the 15 on the team. What made it really interesting was the intense cloud burst with ferocious lightning and thunder. I adjusted one team member just as a huge lightning struck and the roar of thunder followed immediately...I shouted, "she's alive!" thinking of Frankenstein movies. (I later found out planes had to circle the island for two hours because the storm was so intense) It was definitely one of the highlights of my day to educate our medical team of whom only two had been to a chiropractor and just one really understood it. Adjusting, heat; combined with the humidity from the rain, I don't think I have ever sweat that much in my life. I was literally dripping beads of sweat between each team patient. Anywhere but here I would have been very uncomfortable.

At the close of a great day we went around the room with our team meeting...each person's best and worst of the day. Karen, the Nurse that worked with me today mentioned her favorite thing was watching how I worked with the patients in the village. Her worst thing was me adjusting her toes 😊

### **Sunday September 20<sup>th</sup> 2009**

I woke up early and started catching up my journal on the little 9" laptop I brought down. I forgot to bring a paper journal. A few of us got ready to go to church. Most were going to an LDS church but one team member, Shelly, is Catholic so I was going to go with her so she wouldn't be alone. (80 Americans were kidnapped last year...not a good idea to be alone) She decided not to go after all.

Just before we left "Madam Cheap-Cheap" showed up just outside our compound. She brings some great trinkets to buy and take home. It is the haggle system so she

starts out with a price she wants, then, you talk her down. She likes the team and gives them something extra after they buy whatever it is they like. She was sweet.

Driving to church on these windy, poorly paved, and pedestrian packed roads we had to stop in traffic and witnessed one not-so-kind fellow trying to start fights with young men passing by and then he would try to hit them in the head with a big rock in his hand.

Church was nice. We drove up a dirt road or alley that looked like a war zone with the broken down cars half stripped of parts. The road had high concrete walls on each side. At the dead end there was a small gate on the right. We walked through and voila there was a beautiful yard and building with white shirts, cute dresses and smiling faces everywhere. It was like stepping through a portal from the outside street to this Haitian oasis. We met some wonderful people.

After church the ride home in the van was a total sweat factory so the pool was calling. We spent a couple of hours dipping, reading, dipping, and lounging to keep cool.

Today is the easy day, of course.

For dinner we actually made reservations at a place called St. Joseph's. It is a boy's school that finds young boys on the street begging and homeless, and gives them a chance. These boys have to follow strict rules in order to stay (they can stay till they are 18). They are up at 5am starting their day with prayer and scripture together. These boys go to an orphanage each day to take care of many of the kids there. They are given structure and education through the day learning many skills including the arts. Many of the boys are quite good and drawing and painting. They all learn to dance. The reason we were there was to watch their dance performance. It was fantastic! I really can't express how moving it was to watch these boys where were living on the streets of a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country...dance with vigor and expression, knowing they now have opportunities where before they had none.



## Monday September 21, 2009

With an early start I woke up and added to my journal and did a few of my other morning rituals but exercise is out. There are no safe streets to go for a run and with the humidity just the thought of climbing a flight of stairs makes me sweat like crazy.

8:30am the team started to disperse, Kate and I were scheduled for the clinic.

Susan and Jennifer were teaching the care givers just next to the clinic and I would join them for an hour or so to teach range of motion. The care givers class was for family members of individuals who have had a stroke. My part was scheduled for an hour from 10 to 11 but took much longer with a translator and the questions.

Heading up to the clinic I noticed a bus waiting and then saw a group of around 25 couples carrying their babies toward the van. These poor little kids had the body of a 6 month old or so and a head two or three times the size of mine. They were loading up into the bus to go with Lisa, Susan, and Karen just out of town to a place like a "Ronald McDonald House" in the states, where they could stay for the week while they learn about the challenges their baby has and how to care for them before and after the surgery...that is if they are eligible for surgery.

Jen, Chris, Kristen, Rebecca and Ron loaded up in the HHH bus and headed to one of the thousands of orphanages to assess and feed the kids. Once they make an assessment they will return tomorrow better prepared to bring some of the things they need.

My first hour started out with teaching the physical therapy assistants and clinic staff about chiropractic (through a translator) and adjusting them so they could have an understanding of what I am doing there and the part I play in helping patients. It was pretty funny to see the facial expressions of the staff member and those watching as I adjusted someone for the first time. Their eyes would get so big with every 'pop.' As they would get up and feel a change in how they felt and see how their range of motion (ROM) was improved they gained an understanding of one aspect of chiropractic and began talking about patients and family members they would need to bring to me this week.



Between the late start of the clinic and the ROM class for the stroke care givers I wasn't really able to treat too many patients today, maybe eight actual patients and ten staff. At the end of my shift there were no patients but all the interpreters came over and it turned into a "chiropractic fireside" for lack of a better description. I went through chiropractic philosophy and how an adjustment prevents arthritis and helps the nervous system. It actually became a pretty in-depth conversation with the 5 or 6 that were there. It is important this visit that the interpreters and the staff understand that chiropractic is much more than a 'mystical pop' and something magical is suppose to happen. Since voodoo is a prevalent part of the Haitian culture clear explanation of how chiropractic works, I feel, is critical in planting the right seeds for future

chiropractors to visit. (Naturally, to fit in with the culture I shook a few chicken feathers and offered a chant after each adjustment. -kidding)

In the afternoon as teams returned from their different destinations we cooled off in the pool and conversations of our day's adventures ensued. Processing the data for the day and listening to the "best and worst" over our evening team meeting, I could see we were in for a challenging and heart wrenching week.

I believe I will spend the morning tomorrow at the orphanage then come back to the clinic for patients. Apparently there is a single woman in her 50's that runs and funds a small orphanage on her own. She works at a store and pays a couple of care givers to feed and bath the 15 or so kids, most with disabilities. 2 or 3 are able to go to school. One more is well enough to go but she can't afford it. The rest, with their disabilities or loss of limbs would not be accepted even if she could afford it. Several of the kids have cerebral palsy so their faculties are there but physically they have contracted muscles, poor balance and minimal mobility (like Harrison, my son was challenged with after his meningitis). I doubt there is much I can do in a single day of a child's life to help much but I am here so I have to take a look.

## Tuesday, September 22, 2009

I haven't mentioned anything about the food. The staff that works at the house makes up breakfast and dinner every day which is very nice...and you never know what you are getting. Most of it has been pretty good but one of their delicacies is goat soup. I'm not a fan of goat taste. Everything else has been pretty good. We haven't tried much out on the streets. Since we are only here for a week the team tries to be very careful what we eat and drink so no one gets sick. So it is pretty much what is at the house and the snacks we brought from the US.



Well this morning I went to one of the three orphanages we are going to. It was not too far from the compound we are staying. Some of the nurses went yesterday and assessed the needs so we could bring the appropriate things for them today. We stopped at a store and bought bottles and nipples for one of the kids. The 10 month old little girl was not feeding yet and the bottle she had just dumped milk in her mouth where she would choke and gag. The care givers were also shoveling food into the other kids' mouths where many would choke and aspirate so most had an audible rasp in their chest. This can turn to pneumonia. The speech pathologist on our team brought some simple pictures with a few words in Creole explaining how to feed the kids to hopefully help prevent the aspirations...small bites,



feed them sitting up, keep their head straight. (some of the kids just let their head drop or flop backwards...common with Cerebral Palsy [CP]).

In this little group of 14 kids, most had autism, CP or downs syndrome. The two downs boys were very energetic and playful. One little girl was missing the distal half of all her fingers on her left as well as her legs below her knees. She was very bright and walked and ran like it was no big deal. She had giant calluses on her knees and seemed to adapt to her circumstances quite well.

For the kids with CP it is common to have are or foot contractures where the muscles tighten the hand into a malformed fist or the foot is crooked. We all took turns playing with kids and doing play therapy to stretch and mobilize those areas. Naturally I adjusted the kids too. There are different types and symptoms of CP and between the kids there were things I saw in Harrison when he was a baby. These kids are older and lack the attention, therapy and opportunities so their condition remains visibly severe. I wish there was more I could do for them. A single adjustment is not that powerful in these kinds of cases.

At noon Kate, the speech therapist and I, headed back to the clinic for patients, the orphanage team for the day stayed until 2pm.

Today the staff lined up on my return for another adjustment for themselves and has selected several patients for me to treat. The clinic went well. One little older gal who was adjusted just laughed at the popping sounds. Then she was doing her physical therapy on the machines just next to me and as others were getting adjusted she would laugh out loud and shout "pop pop!"

At the end of the shift the PT staff and the interpreters gathered around again with more questions. Today's topic seemed to gravitate toward chiropractic history and patient stories. I shared how chiropractic started with Harvey Lillard, a man in Davenport Iowa who had lost his hearing, and after Dr. DD Palmer (the father of chiropractic) felt his back and pushed on a bone that was more prominent than the others Harvey got his hearing back. *Voila*, chiropractic was born and DD Palmer though he had the cure for deafness. He soon found out that was not the case but deaf people coming to him also had other health problems that were getting better with his treatments.

I shared stories of patients I have seen over the years, some with just aches and pains that improved and others with the somewhat miraculous recoveries obtained through the aid of chiropractic care. Kids with asthma that no longer needing inhalers; women with fertility problems, who after care were able to get pregnant. I shared the modern day deaf-story of one of Shannon's interpreters at an even who had gone deaf as a child and went to a chiropractor for headaches in her 20's and her hearing returned...so she became a sign language interpreter! Naturally, I shared Harrison's

story. I made the point that chiropractic does not 'cure' anything but simply helps the body help itself to heal what it can and function 100% the way it is designed.

It was another good day of planting chiropractic seeds in this country that has no concept of chiropractic. All they know about chiropractic, rehabilitation and proper 'care giving' is what the [Healing Hands for Haiti](#) group brings them.

In the afternoon we took a quick dip to cool off. Today was not quite as hot as the past few days but with the humidity and in the locations I was working I was still sweating like a pig. I feel like I need to carry a beach towel with me just to wipe my forehead and neck between patients. ☹

For some evening down time we loaded in the vans and drove up in the mountains (much cooler) to the Baptist mission. They have great souvenirs and take credit cards. After our 1 hour drive we found the Mission tour shop closed for a 2 week vacation. There were 5 or 6 Haitian souvenir 'shacks' along the street next to the mission. We were mauled by the shop owners trying to get us to buy their trinkets. The prices started out pretty high but if we persisted or walked away uninterested the prices dropped dramatically...\$35 wait sir, \$20, \$18, okay \$12, sir, I am giving this to you, just \$10. Anyway, we all walked away with some fun little Haitian things.



A cloud burst helped wrap thing us with the vendors so we could get heading back down the mountain to the compound. It is the rainy season so we seem to get a good drenching every evening almost like clockwork.

Team meeting was a good close to the day and we began preparing for teaching tomorrow. I don't know if I will get to the Hydrocephaly classes. I definitely need to be in the clinic tomorrow as word is spreading and people are literally bringing their friends and family to the clinic. I will be teaching part of the nurse classes tomorrow as well. The hydrocephaly course for parents is off-site.

Thursday I should be going to another orphanage that has requested we teach American Sign Language to some of the kids. We will see how that goes.

### **Wednesday, September 23, 2009**

I spent most of the day in the clinic. I found the patient cards I brought so I actually documented names, symptoms and treatments today. This took more time of course but is important. I was able to treated 22 patients and staff from 9 to 1pm. Then I went up to the nursing school to teach about soft tissue injuries and the nervous system. People are starting to spread the word and understanding of chiropractic. Several staff or patients from earlier this week brought friends and neighbors to be seen today.

Friday should be busy. Some interesting cases! One patient was brought to me by a PT. He has been paralyzed in his legs since a mid back surgery he had in the states. He is slowly recovering and now able to walk in a walker for short periods of time. His lower extremities could not feel heat or light touch...if I remember correctly, his spinothalamic tract was damaged. I will have to look that one up. Two cute little girls from different families...one with mild torticollis (head tilt) and the other with some unfortunate slow mental response...she was dropped on her head when just 8 days old.

The nursing class went well. It is the first time they have offered that here through HHH. Since the organization is working to build a hospital here they felt it important to start training local nurses so they have a good pool to hire from when the time is right.



At the end of the shift I went to the pool to cool off for a minute (today was not as hot as past days but still, in a building all day with no AC and the fans were not working to even move the air around...ugh, it gets hot.

Walking back to the house from the pool, Johnny, the PT clinic director, approached me with the CT scan of a patient he is working with. He told me the man lost the use of his legs recently and he has been working with him to rehabilitate the lower extremities and hopefully get him walking. He informed me he had prostate cancer and had his prostate removed shortly after he started losing leg function, a month before the operation. The operation was just a month or two ago and a few weeks ago he had these CT scans done. He asked me to take a look to see if I could help his friend with his low back pain while Johnny continues to rehabilitate him. I held up the CT sheets to the sunlight only to find metastatic holes in the bones of the man's pelvis and lumbar spine. It gave me a pit in my stomach to tell Johnny that the cancer has already metastasized so they had removed the prostate too late. I sadly told him, "There is really not much we can do for this guy, I am afraid his days are numbered." Then I asked who he was. Johnny told me it was one of his dear friends. The pit in my stomach got bigger.

Just before dinner a few team members ran to a store to get stuff for guacamole. Wow, the avocados were huge and delicious. Dinner consisted of delicious and strange dishes, as well as, a few not so delicious things to choose from.

Shortly after dinner we had a good team meeting. Clearly each person on the team is having little 'life changing' experiences working with the orphanages, the nurses, or the hydrocephaly kids and parents.

Looks like tomorrow I will be going to one of the city's larger / better organized orphanages. I hear they have some 300 kids. This one is supposed to have their own PT clinic, a nurse on staff, and they are building an audiology portion since they have so

many deaf kids. They have requested American Sign Language classes. I will see what I can do in half a day then I plan to go to the Hydrocephaly school.

**Thursday. September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

Cate, the speech therapist from New Orleans, was really sick last night and this morning so I went to St. Joseph's myself with an interpreter and Antonio, one of the HHH administrators. The trip was primarily for Cate to find a few kids that she could help with speech and see if there were any kids with disabilities we could help with rehab. I didn't see any orphans there but toured the facility. Nice little medical and physical therapy clinic and even a prosthetic shop like HHH has. Five of the seven prosthetic shop employees were deaf and they used mostly American Sign Language.

I thought they had orphans that were hearing impaired but in fact they operate a school for the deaf with four different classes based on age group...20 to 30 students per class. I took the time to visit each class and explain a little about HHH and chiropractic. It was a fun morning.

After the classes Antonio drove me and the translator, David, to the site where they were holding classes for the parents and kids with hydrocephaly. On the way I got a brief history of Haiti and Port Au Prince from Antonio who remembers its glory days before 1965 when it began its path of degradation to the overpopulated land fill it has become today. The road from downtown to the outskirts village we took, he explained used to be next to the ocean waterfront with a nice fish market. Now it is shanty houses and shacks built on top of dirt and garbage.



I asked him why he wasn't wearing his seatbelt. He explained, "In the city if they see you wearing your seatbelt they think you are a 'Haitian just-got-back' meaning you just got back from America so you must be rich and you become a target for kidnapping." (With my complexion there was no hiding that I was not Haitian...I took off my seatbelt anyway) "In the country I wear it," he said, "but in the city it is dangerous and the traffic never moves fast anyway." (This is true, it takes an hour to get 10 to 15 miles around here).

Anyway, the hydrocephaly clinic was amazing. All those parents were finally in a comfortable environment with their children. Four days staying together seeing other kids with the same condition and other parents in their same circumstance...all learning things to help them better take care of their child and their family before and after the upcoming surgery. The surgery is 60% successful in stopping the increasing size of the child's head so their little bodies can catch up. And bless their little hearts; some of these kids had heads twice the size of an adult. To put in proportion, imagine your head being 5 to 10 times its size and weight. It makes sitting up and walking pretty

much impossible. Without treatment life expectancy is pretty short. Chris, Becca and Kristen along with Jonny were doing a great job teaching and reviewing. The parents were really absorbing the information; an amazing feat in itself being cramped in a small building in that heat. I did little more than observe today but just standing in the doorway listening I was a puddle of sweat. Inside was even hotter. Becca was not feeling great but was on the rebound as was Kristen. I was starting to get some cramps and now my turn was coming.

I did get to talk to the mom who's little baby girl I adjusted earlier in the week because she was not nursing well. She tells me (through a translator) that her baby is latching on and nursing much better now. Wow! In just one adjustment...wish it worked that fast all the time.

The rest of the night gets a little fuzzy. We rode home in the HHH van. In town the diesel fumes were not helping my ill feeling. The house staff cooks up a nice spread for breakfast and dinner each night. The morning fruit, cheese toast and such were always palatable. The dinner dishes have not always been as tasty, in my opinion (goat meat and goat stew-definitely not for me); but tonight nothing sounded so good.

I went to bed early while some of the team went out for some local music and desert. I hear the band, RAM, was on vacation. By 10:30pm I was really breaking a fever and having difficulty time breathing. I may have toughed it out at home but in a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country and a team of nurses downstairs I took the same antibiotics the rest of the sick team members had taken to minimize it to a 24 hour problem.

### **Friday, September 25<sup>th</sup> 2009**

Lars (the construction guy from Seattle who comes with the team each year to make repairs around the property), says last night at 10:30pm I called him "Mom" and asked him to get me a thermometer before I took the antibiotic. Really?

At breakfast I was feeling better but not 100%. Cate said she was feeling much better and the rest of the 'sickies' were all better so I knew it wouldn't be much longer for me; Just a 24 hr bug. Word had spread and I had a full day at the clinic with patients coming from distant places so I had to pull it together and get up there.

It was a rough few hours and I felt pasty, pale, like I was running on low octane fuel but I saw around 25 patients over the 5 hour spread. (I took a 40 minute break for a powernap). I was expecting 40+ but I was not about to complain in my current condition.

By the end of the week I was not comfortable leaving the table I planned to donate to the clinic...it felt like people would be trying to adjust each other. I was contemplating locking it in storage or taking it home but at the time I really didn't want to carry

anything back. One of the PTs that volunteers at the HHH clinic was interested in buying the table for his clinic to treat patients when he goes to their homes. (He may just be a PT assistant like the others working here in the clinic but they call themselves Physical Therapists...kind of scary but they are some of the best care Haiti has available when there is not a HHH US team or Canadian team on site). Anyway, we had a long talk and I trust he won't be adjusting anyone so I sold him the table and will use the money to fund one of the PT assistants to come to the US for a month for some intense training.

The rest of the team was finishing up classes at the hydrocephaly school and the caregiver school then handing out certificates of completion. Everyone was so happy and grateful for the classes and the certificates. Pictures were being taking left and right.

After work the team jumped in the pool. I stayed out since I still was not 100%. The chemicals in the pool were checked and fixed this morning. It was a little cloudy Wednesday which is where the team most likely got sick.

Had a final team meeting with the 'positives and negatives' for the week. The week thus far had been a life changing experience for most everyone on the team. Kamie, from Sandy Utah really seemed impacted by the whole experience. She is even talking about adopting one of the orphan kids.

The one negative that really bothered me was the hydrocephaly school. After a week of bonding, hope building and education the parents and kids had really opened up and had a good time. As they were leaving the teaching facility it was back to the 'real world' with misunderstanding and segregation. As they were loading up in the vans the local school kids were walking home and noticed the kids. Shouting rude comments, laughing, pointing and gesturing about the children's big heads it really broke the team's hearts and they did their best to chase off the school brats.



After dinner we went up to the penthouse apartment patio of the apartment complex next to the team house. It is only used by the millionaire who bought the property for the Healing Hands Organization. He is currently a mission president somewhere so he has not been down for a few years. It is decked out nice. I did not feel like I was in a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country. The patio was at the tops of the trees so we could actually feel a little breeze and see a good portion of the night sky and Port Au Prince. I was beginning to feel much better. The team just visited for a while before bed.

### **Saturday September 26<sup>th</sup>**

Usually the team has a beach day or takes a small plane up to some of the big forts and sights of Haiti. This year was a country



road trip to a waterfall and lunch at a hotel in a country village. It was actually very nice to see the country side. I am not a fan of Port Au Prince.

The air was clean, the winding mountain roads were fun and the villages seemed better kept than the city...at least the streets were not piled with refuse. I know most of the team would have preferred the beach. Though I would have loved the beach, I actually enjoy road trips. I was surprised how much the terrain changed in the two hour, 40 mile trip. The waterfall was cool but a little anticlimactic for the journey, and of course, riddled with garbage and people bagging for money. Hmm.



Lunch was nice, the company was great and the pool at the hotel was relaxing. The team has just been a fun group to bond with. There wasn't a 'bad apple' in the bunch. The way we came together and worked as a team of 'strangers' on that first clinic day was the most impressive trip experience to me. Now, a week later we are naturally a closer bunch. Hopefully some of these bonds will be lasting.

Late afternoon as we got closer to the city, the crowded dirty streets, the traffic the diesel fumes started to get to me again. I have never seen so many people in need, so many people missing limbs, such a poor quality of life, yet MOST are cheerful and greet a stranger with a smile. The people we met and treated this week were incredibly...that is not strong enough...immeasurably humble and grateful for what little love, knowledge and service we offered them.

As I thought about the long flights and three layovers to get home to my sweet little family tomorrow I couldn't help thinking how great it will be see them back in our cozy little home.



As I reflected on our TEAM efforts of the past week I realized we didn't even make a dent in the health needs of this country but like the starfish story...to the individuals themselves that we treated, it made all the difference in the world...so the 10 day trip was definitely worth it.

*Jay Shetlin, DC*