



Healing the Children News Greater Philadelphia Chapter

2010 Fall Edition

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Ethiopia - More than a Surgical Mission

Glenn Isaacson, MD - When Desi Ferrell, Executive Director of the Philadelphia chapter, visited Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa Ethiopia a year ago, she was overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problems. The hospital, once the flagship of Ethiopia's public healthcare system had fallen into disrepair. The pediatric ward was filled with well-appearing children. Each had a plastic tube in the neck (tracheotomy) to breath. The children had such severe problems with their voice boxes that they might die if the tube became clogged. In a country with few paved road and unreliable electricity, it was unsafe to send them home. They were trapped in the hospital — some for years.

Desi recognized that helping these children would take more than a surgical mission. She contacted Glenn Isaacson, MD, a pediatric ear, nose and throat doctor (otolaryngologist) who had worked with Healing the Children for 15 years. Through a series of e-mail conversions with doctors at Black Lion, it became clear that advanced surgery, as HTC-Philadelphia delivers in Central and South America would not be enough. These children needed continuing care — the kind that can be delivered only by well-trained surgeons in the host country. The doctors at Black Lion needed equipment and supplies, but more important they needed on-the-job training in special surgical skills.

This is not the stuff of most surgical missions. Sure we can care for dozens of children on a one week mission, but Ethiopia has over 30 million children, most living in poverty, and only 6 practicing otolaryngologists. The hope for the future was a new residency that was training the next generation of ear, nose and throat surgeons. How could HTC-Philadelphia provide

them with the surgical experience needed to care for a country full of kids?

Desi swung into action. She assembled a team of nurses, anesthesiologists and nurse anesthetists ready to care for children half a world away. And she found a partner in Ebba K Ebba, MD, an Ethiopian-born, US-trained pediatrician who was working to build a children's hospital in Addis. Together, they made contacts, arranged for housing, and purchased and transported the large surgical microscope needed to fix the children's breathing tubes.



In October 2009, HTC visited Black Lion and assessed their needs. This scouting trip was essential for planning future surgical missions. The team learned of Black Lion's strengths and its weaknesses. They heard of ill-prepared medical missions in the past that led to poor outcomes and deaths. The next six months were spent assembling an experienced and well-equipped team — a team of caring professionals there to support safe surgery and to teach.

In March of 2010 HTC launched its most ambitious mission yet. It included 30 healthcare providers -- surgeons, and anesthesiologists

as usual, but also an audiologist to do hearing testing and fit hearing aids (Amber Morgan, AuD) and a biomedical technician to fix broken anesthesia machines and monitors. Clinics and surgery dates were planned as usual, but each was coordinated with otolaryngology residents and nurse anesthesia master students. Every OR session was a teaching session. The team gave lectures and provided hands-on training.

Michael Richtey, MD an outstanding pediatric urologist and HTC-Philadelphia veteran gave grand rounds to the Black Lion pediatricians and pediatrics residents. He performed a series of surgeries for severe, neglected bladder and genitourinary disorders. Every case was a teaching case for the Black Lion pediatric surgeons.

HTC-Philadelphia reached beyond the surgical realm in other ways. Elizabeth Drum, MD and several of the nurse anesthetists went to a newly opened public hospital for neurosurgery to provide advanced anesthesia care for children spinal cord defects and tumors. Amber Morgan worked at the Mekanissa School for the Deaf fitting children for hearing aids and teaching the local technicians to be better hearing testers.

The mission was exhausting and elating. HTC cared for over 200 children and performed over 30 major procedures. More important, however, the mission laid the groundwork for continuing education and training of Ethiopian surgeons, nurses and nurse anesthetists -- the best hope for Ethiopian children in the future.

The Author of this story is Dr. Glenn Isaacson, MD, FAAP, FACS

Medical Trip To El Salvador changes lives

A DPM Team led by Todd Gunzy, DPM visited El Salvador in May 2010. The following Story is told by Soraia Refq one of the team members who went on the Trip.



Soraia Refq - The one week medical mission trip to El Salvador with Healing the Children has made me aware of two inconsistencies in life. First is our insensitivity to all of the blessings that we have been given, and second is the reality that there are countless people in the world, who are deprived of the most basic services in life. I am grateful for being a part of a mission that was able to bring hope, contentment and joy to these children of EL Salvador. Their only dream was to be given the opportunity to lead normal lives, and by healing their physical deformities, became happier individuals in return.

It was truly heartwarming to see these children beaming with hope in anticipation

of finally being able to see themselves as normal kids; with feet and hands that will no longer be sources of speculation and even of ridicule in their schools and communities. I have felt and experienced this feeling of deep gratitude, not only from the children but also from their families as well, knowing that

the treatments will not be possible if not for a team of medical professionals who took it upon themselves to correct these deformities. Indeed, after my experience in El Salvador, I will never be the same person.

To say that this experience was able to change my life would be an obvious understatement. In fact, it would be an offense if I were to declare that the change was exclusively confined to my own personal gains. The truth is,

I was merely a small speck in the entirety of its design, and am certain that the good and noble doctors who were with me would agree. While the truth will always remain irrefutable and absolute that I learned enormously from these admirable doctors, it is in helping the children where the essence of this mission truly lies. I am grateful for destiny for having the experience to participate with this noble mission. It has enriched my knowledge on medical technical matters as it has with my understanding of our social responsibility to always, in whatever way that we have been blessed with, profess a self —proclaimed task of helping others. In retrospect, what I truly learned in this mission is the realization that life has blessed us with more material things in order to help others. I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to travel to El Salvador and be part of an amazing team. I've learned a lot not only from the well-renowned doctors but also from each and every child that I was fortunate to meet.

Healing the Children, Greater Philadelphia Needs your Help!

Healing the Children is at a crossroads. Without the financial resources to care for these children our vision of "Healing the Children" is just that a vision. We need your ongoing financial support to make these trips a reality. In addition to one last trip to Ethiopia in October of 2010, HTC is already in the planning stages for two additional trips back to Ehtiopia in 2011, along with a Urology trip to Ecuador and a return DPM/Ortho trip to EL Salvador. In today's tough economic climate, we know there are lots of organizations competeing for your donations. Due to the generosity of the medical professionals going on these medical trips, every \$1 you donate to HTC is turned into roughly \$25 in donated medical care to a deserving child. Please consider partnering with us today and making a difference in the lives of children all over the world.

HTC Philadelphia is a 501(C)(3) tax exempt organization.

Yes I want to Partner with Healing the Children to help make a difference in the lives of children

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