



# THE HEALER

Health Partners International of Canada

SUMMER 2009



Dr. Hardy Friesen receives the 5,000<sup>th</sup> PTP

## Dr. Hardy Friesen carries HPIC's 5,000<sup>th</sup> PTP to Honduras

To his friends and colleagues, Dr. Reinhard Friesen from Peterborough is best known as Hardy. To people living in remote communities in the northwest region of Honduras, he is known as their best hope for receiving medical care.

Villagers in the Copan region near Guatemala live mostly by subsistence farming and are generally very poor. Those who can find transportation into town to seek medical care are faced with the dilemma of how to pay for it. For many, it is a choice between buying food or paying for medicine.

"Imagine being a mother in a small village where there is no doctor and no medicine," says Friesen. "Your child wakes up in the night with a high fever. You are totally helpless."

It is this mission of reducing human suffering that draws Dr. Friesen back, year after year, to the country he first visited in 2000. Since then, he has made connections with Friends of Honduran Children and with them launched the Peterborough Medical Brigade.

In February and March of this year, two groups totalling 39 healthcare professionals – including doctors, dentists, nurses and students – travelled to Honduras to deliver care to this underprivileged population.

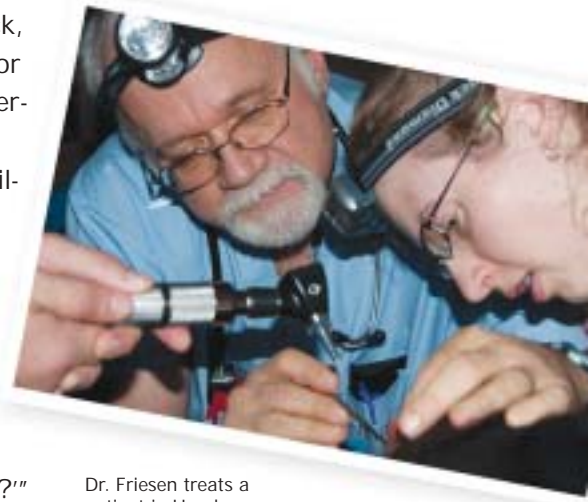
Working with local missionaries, they established mobile clinics in schools in four villages where they treated hundreds of people with the seven Physician Travel Packs they carried with them, including the 5,000th PTP of HPIC's history.

According to Dr. Friesen, everybody needed treatment for intestinal parasites. The team also encountered conditions such as asthma from chronic smoke exposure, machete wounds, scabies and other skin conditions, malnutrition, dental infections, ear infections and pain.

Since he discovered the Physician Travel Pack, Dr. Friesen says there are many good reasons for him and his teams to keep on using it. "It is a terrific value. It's easy to transport. And it is well-stocked with high quality products that are familiar to Canadian doctors."

The fact that so many healthcare professionals are willing to give their time and pay their own expenses to practice in rudimentary conditions does not surprise Dr. Friesen. "People keep asking me why we do this," he says.

"Having seen the need over there, and our resources here, my answer is, 'Why wouldn't we?'"



Dr. Friesen treats a patient in Honduras

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*John Kelsall, former president of HPIC, and his wife Lottie were honoured at the HPIC Appreciation Dinner in May*

## Appreciation Dinner is a celebration of healing

Health Partners International of Canada welcomed more than 200 leaders from the healthcare industry, government, donors and carriers of medicines to its Appreciation Dinner on May 11 in Mississauga. The event was a celebration of the people who have been healed and lives that have been saved around the world, thanks to the concerted efforts of HPIC and its partners.

HPIC president Glen Shepherd applauded the cooperation of the healthcare industry, government, NGOs and medical professionals to meet the challenge of delivering the right medicines where they are most needed.

"You are helping HPIC make medicines available to vulnerable populations that would otherwise do without," he said. "And this medicine, most of it very basic, saves lives every day in the developing world."

The Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Industry, was an honoured guest at the event, and delivered remarks of encouragement and support.

The generosity and hard work of HPIC's partners has enabled the provision of \$300 million of medical aid to the developing world since 1990.

## Cholera victims in Zimbabwe were treated with medicine from Canada

In late 2008 and early 2009, HPIC helped in a worldwide humanitarian response to Zimbabwe's cholera outbreak.

Patients in parts of Zimbabwe that were hardest hit by the epidemic were treated thanks to emergency shipments of medical aid from HPIC that were airlifted to Harare in December and January. By the end of March, the World Health Organization had reported that the situation was improving.

Health Partners International of Canada partnered with agencies in Zimbabwe to provide close to \$5 million of medicines and supplies, including antibiotics and oral rehydration solution.

Cholera is a potentially fatal bacterial infection that causes severe diarrhea and dehydration. The disease is spread through untreated sewage and contaminated drinking water. It is estimated that hundreds of people were infected on a daily basis in Zimbabwe because of the breakdown of infrastructure and very poor sanitation conditions.

"The dramatic humanitarian tragedy unfolding in Zimbabwe touches the hearts of us all," said HPIC President Glen Shepherd. "Thanks to our partners, we are grateful to be able to do our part to bring healing and hope to the people of Zimbabwe."

*Children were among the most vulnerable who were treated for cholera in Zimbabwe*



## Where no dentist has gone before

In remote villages in northern Ghana, residents have never seen a dentist. In fact, there is not even a word for “dentist” in the local language. So when a team of 33 Canadian healthcare professionals, including three dentists, travelled to the area to carry out a medical - dental mission, the patients lined up for much-needed care.

“...we were able to give the young woman a chance to smile again.”

According to dentist Dr. Michael Banh, one patient in her mid-40s presented to the dental clinic with a large benign growth in the front of her mouth. Although she was not in any pain, the growth prevented her from chewing and speaking properly, and was an obvious esthetic concern to her. With the donated local anesthetics, sterile scalpel blades, and the plain gut sutures provided in the

Dental Travel Packs, the growth was painlessly excised and the wound was closed. “From that simple procedure, we were able to give the young woman a chance to smile again.”

The team visited four different villages in Ghana, setting up makeshift clinics under a canopy in an open field, usually beside a school or similar type of public building. Patients were seated in an upright sturdy chair for treatment, with a helper standing behind the chair to support the back of patient’s head. Dividers around the chairs helped provide some privacy during treatment. Typically, the dental clinics treated between 50-70 people each day, primarily for extractions.

Dr. Banh says many people had teeth broken right down to the gums, due in part to the practice of chewing chicken bones for the calcium. “Most people live with tooth pain or abscess until the tooth eventually works its way out of the bone due to periodontal bone loss,” he says.

“It’s difficult for me to put into words the world of difference the Dental Travel Packs made to our dental mission and our patients in Ghana,” reports Dr. Banh. “Without them, over 500 patients who showed up at our dental clinic would still be in pain or chewing on rotting tooth roots. Thanks to the donated local anesthetics, we were able to remove hopeless teeth for patients in a pain-free and humane manner that every person on this planet deserves. We were able to eliminate dental abscesses and provide medications for pain relief.

“If I go on another dental mission, I will definitely use the Travel Packs again because they are comprehensive, well organized, compact and the value of the supplies provided is incomparable.”



*A Ghanaian woman sees a dentist for the first time in her life*

# From machetes to mango trees

## Medicine from HPIC heals the wounds

Eighteen-year-old Alex arrived at the Northwest Haiti Christian Mission with an infection due to popping a blister he got using a machete. When he finally came for help three weeks later, the infection was so bad that the medical staff feared he would lose his hand, or at least the use of his hand. Two types of antibiotic from Health Partners International of Canada were used to treat the infection and his hand healed.

Ten-year-old Wilken also showed up at the mission. He fell out of a mango tree one Saturday afternoon and put his teeth through his lower lip, displaced his top front teeth, and broke his arm.

When he arrived at the mission two days later seeking help, his mouth was a mess and infection had set in. The dentists at the mission stitched his lip and fastened his teeth in their proper place. They started him on antibiotics from HPIC for the infection, and set his broken arm. The clinic team opted to keep him on site to ensure follow-through with the antibiotic treatment.

Wilken and Alex are among the hundreds of young people who are treated at the NWHCM medical facilities in St. Louis du Nord, Haiti every year. The population of the northwest region of Haiti suffers from extreme poverty, malnutrition and lack of clean water. Without the mission, most people in a catchment area of 55,000 would not have access to school and medical services.

HPIC's ongoing partnership with the mission has grown from the provision of several PTPs per year since 2005, to regular large shipments of medical aid beginning in 2008.



Wilken was treated at the Northwest Haiti Christian Mission after a nasty fall



Health Partners International of Canada is a not-for-profit relief and development organization that works through partnerships, without discrimination and according to Christian values, to increase access to medicine and improve health in the developing world.

HPIC issues tax receipts for donations.  
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