The Official Newsletter of the International Learning Experience in Pharmacy (iLEAP)

iLEAP 6 Haiti

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Leah Loeffler, PharmD Candidate 2014

"The mental and physical challenges I had to overcome in Haiti were overwhelming at times. The experience was a learning process and has contributed to my personal growth. I loved every minute of this trip through the struggles and achievements we made as a team."

Aileen Ahiskali, PharmD Candidate 2014

"Being quickly taken out of my comfort zone, I did not think I'd survive those two weeks. Looking back at it now, I see some of my proudest moments. I conquered many of my fears and overcame the heat and exhaustion. Would I do it again? Absolutely – without question."

Sergie Antoine, PharmD Candidate 2014

"Going back to my hometown for the first time after the devastating earthquake of 2010 was an emotional journey. This experience allowed me to give back to my fellow Haitians, be a role model and, hopefully, a source of hope for them!"

By Aileen Ahiskali

Haiti Communitere (HC) is a Haitian based organization that strives for Haitian and international groups to work together as a community. HC was our home for the two weeks we spent in Haiti.

Aileen, Sergie, and Leah on the front porch of HC.

The front gate of HC stands out from the rest of the dull, unpaved street. Beautiful bright colors welcome visitors. At our first glance, we realized that modern conveniences were in short supply and we'd have to learn to adapt. All of the toilets, except for one, were compost toilets. Compost toilets are an environmentally friendly way to effectively manage waste. Showers were outdoors with cement walls separating each roofless stall. Lindsey, a manager at HC, guided us around the compound, mentioning the various projects and unique features. Volunteers from across the world come to HC to learn about and help out with these innovative projects.

For example, a small home was built from used, cleaned styrofoam that could withstand greater than 8.0 on the Richter scale. These Styrofoam blocks are reusable; if an earthquake damaged the house, there would be no need to buy new blocks. It was an amazing opportunity to see innovative ideas like this, come together and executed successfully.

Most rooms, including our own, were fabricated from simple or reusable parts. A large dome, constructed from a durable fabric, housed numerous bunk beds sporting mosquito nets. Another room, in which we stayed, was made from an old shipping container. Both structures were without doors, instead, sliding curtains took their place. Throughout Haiti, many families are forced to sleep in 'shifts' as there is not enough space for everyone to lay down at the same time. Seeing the local community housing demonstrated a prime lesson; be thankful for what you have. We were taken completely out of our element; going from air conditioning and indoor plumbing to humidity and outhouses. Yet, when we were packing to leave, none of us wanted to say goodbye. Our time in Haiti showed us how blessed we truly are; a lesson learned that will stay with us forever.

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The CONTAINER

By Aileen Ahiskali

Located within HC is an oversized shipping container, full of medical supplies. All donations are stored within the container until they are needed by Ti Kay.

Over the years, donations flowed in from various sources, and thus created a need for plentiful storage. Boxes and bags full of medical supplies and various medications were stored inside. Part of our mission in Haiti was to re-organize and clean up the container. The task in front of us was daunting; we asked ourselves, "Can we actually do this?!"

We were all nervous to enter the unlit and cramped container, not knowing what we might find inside. It turned out there was an organizational system in place, and there were no surprises (ie: cockroaches). Countless hours were dedicated to restoring organization and the final product was *impeccable!* We were able to accomplish a task that all residents at HC deemed 'impossible'. This will always be marked as one of our greatest accomplishments.

Walking away from the experience, we stand proud. Through the undying heat and torturous humidity, we worked hard for hours on end. With masks on our faces and gloves on our hands, nothing could have stopped us from completing what we set out to do.

Sergie, Leah and Aileen inside the container

BEFORE

AFTER

Sunset view from the top of the container

TI KAY

By Leah Loeffler

Ti Kay, which translates to "little houses" is the name of a non-profit organization which serves patients infected with tuberculosis (TB) and/ or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in the *Hôpital de l'Université d'État d'Haïti (HUEH)*, a government hospital in Port-au-Prince. TB, an easily transmissible disease prevalent in Haiti, was known as the "malady of the little house" because people infected with TB were quarantined within small houses. An American doctor Megan Coffee, along with a local TB nurse established Ti Kay after the earthquake in 2010 because the hospital's TB and HIV clinic were no longer functional. Ti Kay houses around 60 patients infected with TB as well as HIV.

Patients afflicted with TB and/ or HIV are physically weak as the disease(s) take(s) over their bodies. Daily walks around the complex are essential for improving patients' strength physically and emotionally. All patients are given two meals daily and the very thin patients known as the "skinnies" are given supplemental meals like protein drinks about 2-3 times a day. These patients have a hard time drinking the protein, they may be nauseous or giving up on life, so someone has to sit with them to make sure that it is finished. Another snack consisting of a hard-boiled egg and a banana is selectively given to the thinnest patients because there is simply not enough to go around. This was hard for our team to get comfortable doing. Despite limited resources and lack of a proper facility, we were able to see a young girl named Lovely, transform from being bedridden to becoming an outpatient! The positive outcomes of Ti Kay make the hardships worth it and sick patients seem less hopeless.

BEFORE

AFTER

The medications administered through Ti Kay are limited based on availability and administered by the nurses. Ti Kay's pharmacy consists of desk space, shelves and file cabinets in an office and a storage tent with medications and supplies. As pharmacy students, it seemed as though there wasn't very much pharmacy to practice. However we learned that we would be able to contribute by transforming the clinic's storage tent of medications and supplies into a functional use of space.

Ti Kay, like many non-profit organizations relies on volunteers and donations to bring in medical supplies. Because of limited staff and fluid job descriptions, it is difficult to maintain organization of the tent. The first day we were handed the keys to the ominous tent, we were all taken aback as we unzipped the opening. Boxes were piled high as well as blocked the entrance, making entering impossible.

Our first plan consisted of categorizing each drug by name, strength, and formulation such as tablet, suspension, IV solution, etc. This is when we encountered our first major obstacle and realized we were no longer in America!

We came to Haiti with packing tape, tons of zip-lock bags, and markers, but there were just so many drugs that we ran out of bags in half a days work. Zip-lock bags and plastic storage bins are a very expensive commodity in Haiti.

So we had to reconfigure our plan. We then decided to categorize drugs by class, for example antibiotics, antifungals, first-aid and so forth. This increased our productivity and available resources. We were so efficient we completed our project in less than one week, ahead of schedule.

We were amazed at the outcome, because you can now walk inside the tent and see which medications are on the shelves and every box is labeled appropriately. We made a diagram that maps out the categorized medications, so that the tent is functional for anyone to use.

"Great things came from organizing the tent."

On our third day organizing the tent we met two patients with TB/HIV who would help us complete our task as well as become our friends. "Michnida" is a 12 year-old girl; her date of birth is unknown because she is an orphan. She resides at the hospital and was our resident large insect killer. Christopher, also known as Dragon, is a 19 year-old boy who managed heavy box movement. They killed dozens of roaches, as we screamed running out of the tent, and helped with the manual labor such as cleaning and removing debris. The morale of the whole experience was lifted by their presence and never-ending smiles.

During breaks away from the tent we would teach Michnida and Chris English in return for Creole. As a token of our appreciation we gave Michnida a sundress and a soccer ball for Chris!

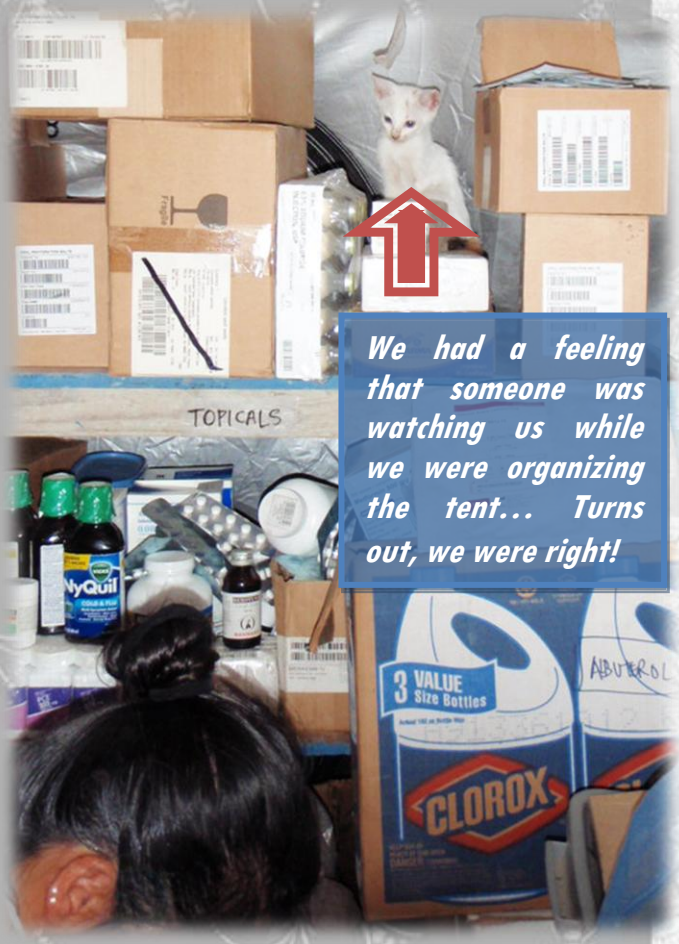
From this experience, we have observed that Ti Kay is an amazing program which provides much needed services to a community which may not receive them otherwise. We feel very privileged to have been given this opportunity to contribute to this program.

Sorting donations at HC

Cleaning & organizing with the help of outpatient, Chris Dragon.

Suitcases full of donations

These patients shared their incredible stories with us. Their spirited determination to live is what ultimately led to their recovery from TB.

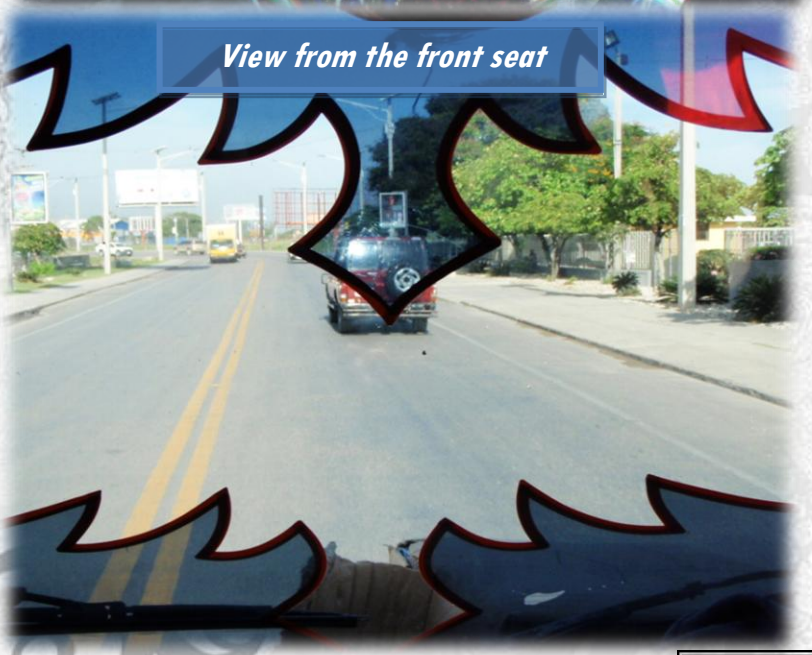


We had a feeling that someone was watching us while we were organizing the tent… Turns out, we were right!

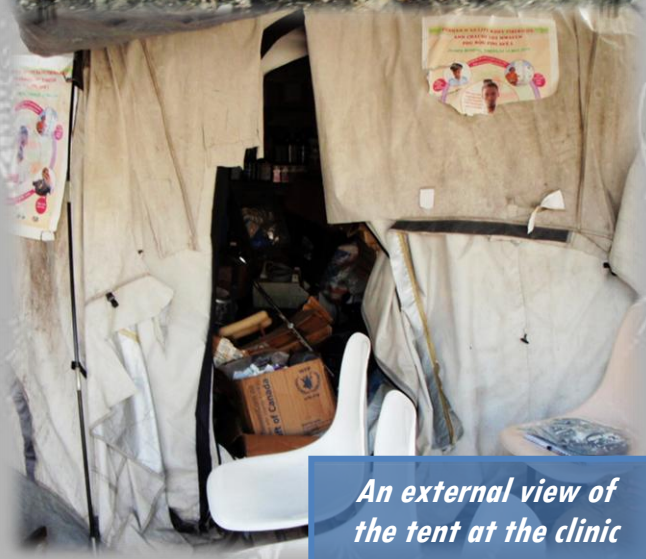
Sorting through chemotherapy donations

Vivid images and bright colors covered the vast majority of tap-taps (our major form of transportation while in Haiti)

View from the front seat



The primary method of garbage disposal in Haiti: burning it in the streets



An external view of the tent at the clinic

Our last day at the clinic

Pharmacy Education

By Sergelyne Antoine

There is only one pharmacy program in Haiti, offered in the medical school of the national university, *Université d'Etat d'Haïti, Faculté de Médecine et de Pharmacie.* We were fortunate to be able to meet with the current Vice Dean of the pharmacy program Mrs. Magalie Rosemond. In just one year, her ambition has led to improvements, paving the way for future endeavors. She was in charge of the *Direction Centrale de Pharmacie et de Contrôle des Substances Chimiques* (DCP/CSC), the Central Department of Pharmacy and Regulations of Chemical Substances of the Department of Health and of the Population in Haiti before assuming the role of Vice Dean in July 2012.

The pharmacy program accepts 50 students annually based on an entrance exam administered every August. Similar to our pharmacy program, third and fourth year students have introductory and advanced pharmacy practice experiences in community pharmacies, industries, and the *Hôpital de l'Université d'État d'Haïti*, a government hospital. The fifth and final year of service may be spent in a hospital, community pharmacy, or warehouse. Students graduate with a Bachelor's degree in pharmacy.

Part of the vision for the pharmacy program is to provide students in good academic standing the opportunity to pursue clinical and industrial careers. After students have completed the final year of service, they may take a specialized exam to be eligible for post-graduate training, similar to an American residency.

The Vice Dean is very interested in developing an exchange program where students from both countries can experience healthcare in different settings. The target for this initiative is to increase the quantity of trained personnel in the country and improve the quality of care provided to the local community.

We give Vice Dean Rosamond all of our support with her ambitious projects for the progress of the profession of pharmacy in Haiti! We hope that the iLEAP program will be able to develop a strong relationship that will ultimately improve patient care in Haiti.

Project Medishare

By Sergelyne Antoine

In contrast to the *Hôpital de l'Université d'Etat d'Haïti*, a government hospital, we also visited a private hospital *Hôpital Bernard Mevs* which partners with Project Medishare, a non-profit organization established in Haiti 12 hours after the earthquake.

The facility in Haiti offers critical and trauma care, as well as newborn and pediatric intensive care. It includes a cholera treatment facility, an advanced prosthetic facility, several rural community centers, and most recently, a chemotherapy center.

The chemotherapy center is across the street from the hospital. Dr. Vincent DeGennaro ensures that the facility runs smoothly and that the nurses are continuously trained to administer the medications. We were able to bring a much needed chemotherapy drug donation with us from the U.S. He told us that it is extremely challenging to find the most consistent, affordable, sustainable supply. The facility provides patients with a comfortable place to receive their therapy every day of the week. The building has several classrooms where health care providers can meet and receive training. While they have the essentials to run the facility, the center is still under construction. Because of the lack of resources, the staff must think creatively to provide patient care. An example of this is their hood made from an old neonate incubator to compound chemotherapy intravenous bags. This proves how committed they are to provide the best care possible by making what they have work!

From right to left: Martin, Suzanna, Sergie, Aileen, Leah, Vince

Martin Elie Pharm.D. is in charge of the hospital's main pharmacy. He is a Haitian pharmacist who graduated from St. John's University School of Pharmacy. His accomplishments are really inspiring for us future pharmacists. After the earthquake, he rebuilt the pharmacy from nothing. He started from designing to building to programming the computer system and structuring the workflow without any prior experience. He has trained his technicians how to dispense most inpatient medications and intravenous solutions. As he told us, it is still a work in progress as he is always looking for new ways to improve workflow and patient care. He is currently working on a big project for medical waste disposal at the hospital which would ultimately be applicable to the entire country.

Our visit to the *Hopital Bernard Mevs* allowed us to observe a different side of healthcare in Haiti. Project Medishare has a well-structured volunteer program and lodging facilities for their volunteers. We urge anyone to consider this experience; it will allow you to learn as we did and/or to make a difference in patients' lives!

4C Laboratory

During our trip, we had the opportunity to visit one of three drug companies in Haiti. *Les Laboratoires 4C*, the 4C Laboratories, was founded in 1952 by a Haitian-Canadian association. In 1978, it was taken over by a group of Haitians who had the goal of becoming one of the biggest pharmaceutical companies in the country. Their motto is "*Notre priorite c'est votre santé*" which means "Your health is our priority". The 4C stands for Carribean Canadian Chemical Company. They manufacture around 145 products and import about 65 products from different countries. Their products range from medications to baby formula, protein powder, and other essential products.

Notre Priorité c'est votre Santé

50 ans

Laboratoires 4C

Rte de Delmas and Delmas 71

T(509) 2249-4000

F(509) 2249-0379

www.laboratoires4C.com

On our last day, we visited *Future for the Kids*, an orphanage cofounded by Mr. Frantz Lafalle and Ms. Sene Carlune. The first location of FKO was destroyed by the massive earthquake in 2010; luckily no one was injured but the damage was devastating. The new location lacks sufficient resources; however it does provide a safe haven for the children. We brought an assortment of toys and educational aids to distribute. We learned that to hire a cook, launderer and teacher would cost less than $100 per month to sustain the entire orphanage. The children left a lasting impression on all of us; regardless of their unfortunate circumstances, they remained full of life and excitement.

By Aileen Ahiskali

Future for the Kids
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Thank You

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Claudia Rossel
Danielle Lai
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Declasse
Denise Liu
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Leah Peckerman
Leila Tibi-Scherl
Liberty Quinto
Lillian Venezies
Linda Ludwig
Lindsay Goldstein
Lisa Kim
Manish Sharma
Margie
Mary Gannon
Mary Gillman
Michael Bender
Michale Kanfm
Mary Kimball
Mikhail Inglin
Morristown Library
PATH
Patricia Saunders
Paul Finizio
Paurul Sighal
PharmD class '13,'14
Regine Beliard
Rodney St Fleur
Ruth Bensley
Serhat & Kay Ahiskali
Sophia Del
Tammy Vo
Tien Truong
Timothy Nguyen
Travis & Jessica Georgieff
Victor Emmanuel Joseph
Wei
William Vincent
Xiushan Lai
Lewis
Ziya Bucukoglu

ALUMNI

My name is Katrina and I attended the medical mission to Haiti in 2012 with Dr. Gim and Dr. Cha. Since then I graduated and worked for Walgreens as a floater in NYC for 4 months before accepting a position at Troop Medical Clinic, which is a mixed acute/ambulatory-care setting, stationed at Camp Atterbury Military base in Indiana. I have been providing pharmacy services to our uniformed members who are mobilizing and demobilizing as well as civilian contractors completing missions overseas. Shortly after starting this position, I began working on a pharmacy practice implementation project with Major Rego, the active-duty pharmacist at the clinic. We've collected data to determine the prevalence of polypharmacy in service members deployed overseas in order to assess the need and determine the feasibility of having a clinical consult service consisting of comprehensive medication therapy reviews. When I am not practicing pharmacy, I am holding jewelry making classes at a Parks and Recreation Facility in my town, taking road trips over the weekends, and making sushi at home because, unlike in NYC, it cannot be found for many miles from quiet small town of Franklin.

A special thanks goes out to our professor, Dr. Suzanna Gim. Without her, this experience would not have been possible. We all wish her the best of luck with future iLEAP teams, and hope to work together again one day.