



“Learning While Serving”

Hillside Health Care International Update

September 2011

Clinic Director Update

By Dan Thibault

Hillside has gone through many changes over the past two years since Maria and I have taken over the clinical directorship. With the help and guidance of our local staff, the Board, long and short term volunteers, Hillside has grown into a vibrant player in the health care system of the Toledo District. For this reason, we are fortunate to state that our student and short term volunteer placement demand is very high. Our programs are expanding and continue to take shape, as we work hand in hand with the Ministry of Health (MoH) to provide health care to the district.

We attribute a big share of this re-growth to our two long term volunteers that recently returned to the U.S. – Dr. Sue and Len Leib. They were the big “shot in the arm” that Hillside needed. We are anticipating two long term volunteers, Dr. Elissa Lapide and Dr. Dan Fein coming for 6 months starting January 2012. Of course, we have a great



At clinic preparing to go on mobile

staff that enables Hillside to perform its day to day work. We have a great group of young local trainees that supervise the lab, pharmacy, intake, mobile clinic, etc.

We are especially proud that we now have two Hillside Student Loan participants – Jennie Ical, now in nursing school in Belmopan, and Alfia Pau, taking pre-nursing classes in PG. These two have been exemplary staff members and are committed to returning to Hillside as our core leadership.

We are happy that Joyce Lopez has returned to Hillside and has continued the work that Len Leib set up for accounting, statistics, and student scheduling. Since Joyce has several years of experience with the MoH, she has performed the key role of coordinating our services with them. Most notable is her key role in the Community Health Worker training and supervision program.

Our two volunteer RNs, Liz Bleacher and Suz Miller have done wonders for our monthly Health Fairs, Home Visit Program, Student accompaniment and all around fill-ins. Since they live on campus, they have more personal contact with our students and volunteers than anyone else.

In-coming next month is Monica Roe, volunteer PT director, who will be with us for one year, to re-establish the PT program. Although Hillside has had periodic visits and services of PT volunteers and had a PT program years ago, this will be a re-evaluation and establishment of the program. We have high hopes of its success.

Maria and I have seen many indications that Hillside will continue to move forward and change as Toledo’s health care needs change. We are happy to be a part of this process.

Inside this issue:

<i>Clinic Director Update</i>	1
<i>Dr. Sue: Reflections on Our Year at Hill-</i>	2-3
<i>A Letter to Hillside</i>	3-4
<i>Featured Hillside Alumni</i>	4
<i>Donation and Volunteering information</i>	4

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Dr. Sue: Reflections on Our Year at Hillside

By Sue Leib

Since 2006, when my husband, Len, and I spent a month volunteering at Hillside, we have been planning a way to be able to spend a longer time down at the clinic. So in the summer of 2010, with our youngest entering his third year of college, the house sold, and both of us having left our jobs, we flew down to Punta Gorda to spend a year working at the clinic. We had anticipated an adventure. We got a wonderful, magical year.

Why was it a magical year for my husband and me? First was the opportunity to live and work in a different culture. Living in the US we are very insulated and being able to see how the rest of the world lives expands one's horizons. Second was the honor of working with the wonderful staff at Hillside. Not only Dan and Maria Thibault, the clinic directors and Joyce Lopez, the clinic administrator, but all the staff - Evert, Rudy, Amelia, Alfa, Jenny, Melissa, James, Sophia, Alva, Allen, our new staff - Ana, Virginio and Leslie and our volunteer nurses - Suzanne and Liz. We are very fortunate to have such a hard working and dedicated group of people working at Hillside. Getting to know and becoming involved in the lives of patients is one of the true joys and privileges of being a physician and this was no different in Toledo than in the US. People in Toledo are very appreciative of the medical care that Hillside provides. Becoming a part of the medical community in Toledo, getting to know the administration, nursing and medical staff at the Punta Gorda Hospital and Polyclinics was especially rewarding. For me teaching the students and residents is one of the highlights of working at Hillside. Every month I had the opportunity to instruct, inform and help to mold a new



Dr. Sue and Len Leib at Caracol

“For me teaching the students and residents is one of the highlights of working at Hillside. Every month I had the opportunity to... help mold a new group of learners and in turn learn from them.”

group of learners and in turn to learn from them. My husband and I especially enjoyed being able to work together during our year at Hillside, and to work for an organization that we care about and feel offers a wonderful service to the people of Toledo and a unique experience for volunteers and students. Of course there were also our weekends and vacations and we took full advantage of all that Belize has to offer.

Things have changed significantly since Len and I spent our month at Hillside in 2006, both at Hillside and in health care in the Toledo District. Hillside now hosts 11 medical students, physician assistant students, residents and pharmacy students every month, up from the 4 to 6 students a month we were hosting prior to 2009. The completion of the wonderful dorm, Abby's house, is a big reason behind the increase in students, as now we are able to house up to 16 students and volunteers at a time. Much of the change is due to the leadership of Dan and Maria Thibault, the current clinic directors who came to Hillside in the summer of 2009. Dan and Maria increased the number of Eldridgeville clinic sessions from 3 days a week to 5 days a week and increased the number of mobile clinics that Hillside runs from twice a week to 5 days a week. This means that Hillside has one team of students and providers at clinic and one team on mobile every day which gives the students a very rich, busy, and rewarding experience.

By expanding our number of clinics and mobile clinics, Hillside is better able to fulfill its mission of providing healthcare to the Toledo district by caring for even larger numbers of Toledo residents. Hillside presently sees over 8000 clients a year and the numbers are increasing. Last year we added a women's health care program, providing PAP smears and family planning services, which have been very well received by our clients both at the Eldridgeville clinic and in the villages. We added laboratory services to the clinic, saving our patients a trip into Punta Gorda and improving our ability to provide medical care, especially for our clients with chronic illnesses. In the near future we will be adding HIV testing to the services we offer. This fall, with the addition of a long-term physical therapist, we will again have physical therapy services on a regular basis, the only rehabilitation services available in the Toledo District.

Community health has been part of the Hillside mission since its founding. This year we expanded our



community health focus by implementing, with the Belize Ministry of Health and several other organizations, a community health workers' training program. This program provides health education and training for the community health workers, lay people from the villages, who provide the first level of medical care for the villages of Toledo. Numerous studies have shown that strong community health workers can significantly improve the health care of even the most remote and impoverished villages. Hillside also offers health education programs at schools, including school physicals, tooth brushing, and a fluoride dental varnish program, and in the communities.

The health care system in the Toledo District has improved significantly over the last several years. While there is still no sub-specialty care available in Toledo, the primary care services have expanded and improved. There are more doctors available at the Ministry of Health Clinics (called Polyclinics). The Punta Gorda Polyclinic is open 12 hours a day during the week as well as Saturday mornings and there is a brand new Polyclinic in the village of San Antonio. The Polyclinics are striving to improve the level of their care through staff training and instituting standards of care for treatment of diabetes, hypertension and pediatric illnesses.

It is imperative that Hillside implement the same level of care and services that are offered at the Polyclinics. Towards that

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goal, under the leadership of Joyce Lopez, who returned as Hillside's administrator in January, 2011, Hillside has been working very closely with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Punta Gorda and San Antonio Polyclinics. Only by working cooperatively with the Belize MoH can Hillside sustain its mission in Toledo.

Now I have the opportunity to continue our involvement with Hillside by taking over as the Stateside Director of Operations. Jeff Hartman has done a truly outstanding job in this role for the last five years and I greatly appreciate all that he has done and that he will continue to be involved by serving on the Board of Directors. Hillside is facing several challenges over the next few years. While student enrollment is at an all time high and we are booked with students through November, 2012, several funding sources are no longer available due to the current economic reality. In order to remain a vital part of the health care in Toledo, Hillside needs to continue its present programs and consider expanding and adding programs, such as expanding the community health care worker training, looking into other public health projects and possibly implementing a dental program. Hillside has also committed itself to mentoring future leaders by instituting a student loan program to train promising Hillside staff members in medical professions. These programs take staff, transportation, space and materials, and of course funding. I look forward to working with our staff, volunteers and the thousands of Hillside supporters as we commit ourselves to continuing and sustaining Hillside's mission in southern Belize.



Dr. Sue with Patient

A Letter to Hillside

By Roy & Melanie Elfrink

Dear Hillside Directors:

We returned last week from our second tour of volunteer work at Hillside Clinic in Belize. Each time we volunteered for three weeks. Melanie is a family practitioner; Roy is a General Surgeon who did office-type cases at the clinic. We want to pass along our impression of the many encouraging changes we observed on this second visit.

We have been fortunate to do volunteer medical work in many countries, including Papua New Guinea for nine months, Uganda for one month, and shorter trips to Haiti, El Salvador, and Guatemala. We have seen many different ways of providing care



Students doing health education at a high school



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“Learning While Serving”

Upcoming Events

November Fundraising Event: Hillside would like to notify our donors that we will be asking for their support during the first week of November. Look forward to our call or letter!

A Letter to Hillside (continued from page 3)

for people in settings with widely varying resources. Last year we were impressed that Hillside was able to provide such good care with such limited resources. The staff was caring and capable, good records were kept- which is essential with such rapid turnover, and to a large extent effective medications were available in a well-organized pharmacy. This year it was immediately clear that Hillside is now working more closely with the Ministry of Health, doing more to share records, medications, and providing visits to remote areas via mobile clinics. The number of Belizean staff is higher, and some of these are being groomed for education in medical areas, including nursing, pharmacy, and possibly even medical school. The lab is able to do blood draws, and is well-organized to keep track of pap smears and other tests sent away to the Ministry of Health. We can only attribute these improvements to the work of Dan and Maria Thibault, with the help this past year of Dr. Sue and Len Leib.

Our purpose in writing is simply to let you know how effectively they are working to improve Hillside Clinic and the quality of care that is available both at the clinic and also in the Toledo District. Hillside has become a center for training health workers, and local physicians mentioned how inspired they are by the good work of people like Dr. Sue. As a primary care rotation for students, it is very hands-on and busy, which allows students to see and do many different things.

We applaud the good work the Board is doing to support Dan and Maria and the staff at Hillside Clinic. Your efforts are making a difference.

Sincerely,

Roy Elfrink, M.D., FACS

Melanie Elfrink, M.D.

Featured Hillside Alumni

Kristina Arendas M.D., Hillside Class of 2006

Education: University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 2007

Currently: Living in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada and working as a resident in Ob/Gyn.

Why did you go to Hillside?: To experience health care in a third world country, to get international medical experience, and to help a community in need.

How did Hillside impact you personally and professionally? I learned a lot about health care in developing countries. I also discovered what an impact a modest project can have in a community. My time in Belize made me reflect upon my medical career and made me realize that I want to continue to be involved in international health in the future.

What was the best memory of your time at Hillside? The mobile clinic days were my favorite!

Why should people support Hillside? Hillside is an amazing organization which offers both great support to the community in Eldridge and surrounding towns, but also gives wonderful opportunities to healthcare students, giving them a chance to experience first hand the true meaning of primary care and a chance to make a difference and impact a community.



Considering a Donation to Hillside?

Hillside Health Care International can't accomplish its mission of serving those in need of medical care without the support of people like you. If you want to offer financial support, donations can be sent to: **Hillside Health Care International , P.O. Box 151, Brookfield, Wisconsin 53008-0151.** You can also donate online at www.hillsidebelize.org

Thinking of Volunteering?

If you are a medical professional with a desire to volunteer, Hillside may be the perfect match for you. Opportunities can be short-term (a week to one month) or long-term (several months to a year). Imagine an environment off the beaten path—jungles and rainforests dotted with small villages along a remote river or at the ocean's edge. Visit our website at www.hillsidebelize.org.