



Photo: Mercy Ships International

Creating Smiles in West Africa

By offering free dental clinics to treat and educate residents, Mercy Ships is hoping to sink the occurrence of dental disease in West Africa. Additionally, Mercy Ships is partnering with local residents to train them in good oral health practices.

Most people in the West African nation of Benin can't afford basic dental treatments. And if they could, most wouldn't have access to a dentist: There are only 52 dentists in a country of 7 million people.

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Volunteers with Mercy Ships assist in a range of areas such as dental and medical care, relief aid, and training for long-term, positive changes in developing countries.



said Jocelyn Ahouhnmenou. She waited three days in line with her daughter Débora to see a dentist. Neither of them had ever had a dental check-up. Like so many others in Benin, they live with oral pain daily and no way to end it. Ahouhnmenou had difficulty with caries while her daughter struggled with losing her baby teeth.

Mercy Ships, which operates a fleet of hospital ships, provides free medical care to West African nations. While dental teams set up clinics in town, surgeons perform life-changing operations onboard.

Pre-screened patients arrived at the dental clinic every day with appointment cards in hand. Others waited in line — sometimes for days — hoping for a chance to see a dentist. Dominique Vonnez, Mercy Ships’ dental coordinator screened the waiting people, offering appointments and hope. After three days of waiting, it finally was Jocelyn and Débora’s turn. They received an appointment card to see a dentist.

“To see the people who have had so much pain for so long to finally get help ... I have people who come and they have infection coming out of their cheeks, they have swellings that have been there for months, they have been in pain for weeks.” Vonnez recalled. “And for us to be able to say ‘Come in, we can help you today and end that agony,’ for me, there’s a lot of fulfillment and joy in doing what I do here.”

Benin native Martin Dannoume talked



Dental health professionals have helped rebuild smiles in Africa.

about dental hygiene and nutrition as the patients waited in line. Four years ago, he served as a health teacher and translator when a Mercy Ship visited his country. After working with Mercy Ships dentists, he was inspired to assist the poor in his country. He now is training as a dental assistant. “I still continue to teach in schools and churches, but then I have a different plan now, like trying to go to school for dentistry.”

Dannoume assisted a Mercy Ships dentist treating Ahouhnmenou and her daughter Débora. It took only a few moments to resolve months of frustration and mouth pain. The women left grateful for the care they received. Poverty keeps many West Africans from accessing the help they need, but through education and treatment, Mercy Ships is seeking to remedy this problem.

Mercy Ships, the leader in using a fleet of hospital ships to deliver free, world-class health care services to the poor, was founded in 1978. More than 2,400 career and short-term volunteers serve with Mercy Ships each year. Mercy Ships has three hospital ships and offices in 17 countries, and has visited more than 500 ports in 50-plus developing nations. Mercy Ships has performed more than 2 million services, valued at \$250 million.

For more information, visit online www.mercyships.org.

Photos: Mercy Ships International

Agreement Reached on Medi-Cal Hospital Program

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Mike Leavitt, U.S. Health and Human Services secretary, reached an agreement on a series of reforms and a waiver, Safety Net Care Pool, to stabilize public hospitals and bring preventive coordinated health care to beneficiaries in its Medi-Cal program. It also allows the state to expand its health coverage to more than 100,000 people currently uninsured.

"Governor Schwarzenegger and I want to strengthen the health care system in California. This waiver will do that by helping the state cover more people at a lower cost, by moving them from more expensive hospital settings to programs that offer real benefits and a choice of services," Leavitt said.

This agreement helps stabilize the state's safety net hospitals while moving forward on the governor's Medi-Cal redesign to enroll more beneficiaries into managed care. Additionally, the agreement provides for \$540 million in federal

funds over three years for a new coverage initiative to be developed to decrease the number of individuals who are uninsured.

The agreement allows California to secure Medicaid revenues, helping the state's public hospitals handle uncompensated care. As part of the agreement, the Golden State also will make some health care financing reforms to assure appropriate financing in the state-federal partnership.

"I want to thank Secretary Leavitt and his staff for their work with my administration over the past year to bring this necessary federal funding to California," said Schwarzenegger. "This waiver advances our common goal of stabilizing and supporting the state's safety net, while at the same time making progress toward achieving important reforms in our health care delivery system."



PET Scan Is Perfect for Assessing Oral Cancer

Since positron emission tomography scanning lets health professionals assess changes in tissue before other diagnostic images can reveal them, it can improve the way cancer patients are managed, wrote Luis Tamara, MD, Claudia Tamara, DDS, and Ines Velez, DDS, in the May 2005 issue of *Today's FDA*, the Florida Dental Association's journal.

"PET permits assessment of chemical and physiological tissue changes and shows areas of increased uptake in tumor cells, even before they appear as a mass," the authors stated. "PET, therefore, may demonstrate pathological changes long before other diagnostic images would reveal them."

The PET scan allows differentiation between malignant and benign tumors, and may help distinguish between necrosis, scar tissue, tumor recurrence and metastatic disease, the authors said. It also permits the assessment of a patient's progress during therapy, making it possible to identify patients not responding to treatment.

Comments Sought for Data Model

The American Dental Association Standards Committee on Dental Informatics has approved for circulation and comment the proposed American National Standard Institute/ADA Specification No. 1039 for a standard clinical conceptual data model. The goal of the document is to develop and present an understanding of the structure and content of data required to support health care processes.

The proposed specification is the first revision of the 1996 ADA computer-based oral health record concept model, which was utilized as the basis for the development of the ANSI/ADA Specification No. 1000 for standard clinical data architecture for the structure and content of an electronic health record.

Copies of the specification are available by sending an e-mail request to: standards@ada.org or calling the ADA, (800) 621-8099, Ext. 2533.



Tooth-Whitening OK for Pre-teens

It has been demonstrated that it is safe for children as young as 12 to use whiteners. According to the spring 2005 issue of *Journal of the Indiana Dental Association*, a number of dentists are comfortable using whiteners on patients who are 14-years-old, when each tooth pulp is fully formed.

Additionally, the author, Margaret Fehrenbach, wrote it has been safe for children as young as 12 to use at-home whitening products.

However, of course, the ultimate decision is up to the dental professional, the patient, and the patient's guardian. Fehrenbach also pointed out that for teens with tetracycline or dental fluorosis, whitening can be a social lifesaver.

Disaster Response Fund, Phase II

To assist the countries devastated by the Dec. 26 tsunami, the American Dental Association and the ADA Foundation are coordinating long-term rebuilding efforts and dental outreach, along with the FDI World Dental Federation as well as national dental organizations.

The disaster response fund will be utilized to work with the relief organizations, national dental organizations, and others in the affected countries to pay for repairing or rebuilding damaged dental hospitals, clinics, and schools.

The ADA Foundation, the ADA, its staff, members, and friends responded with more than \$300,000 for disaster assistance following the tsunami that killed, injured, and displaced thousands of people. With the extent of the damage more apparent now, the urgency for additional response has emerged.

Specific rebuilding and outreach recommendations are being evaluated. The communities are in clear need of supplies and equipment for dental outreach in the short term, and are in need of assistance to rebuild damaged or destroyed dental facilities.

The ADA and the ADA Foundation



are encouraging donations for its disaster response fund. To donate, download and complete the form located in the ADA Foundation content area of ADA.org, and return it to: ADA Foundation, 211 E. Chicago Av., Chicago, Ill., 60611. Checks may be made payable to ADA Foundation or donors may use their Visa, MasterCard or American Express.

For additional information, contact Dwight Edwards, ADA Foundation's director of development, at edwardsd@ada.org or (312) 440-4717.

Online Scam Alert Issued

An online organization allegedly issuing bogus invoices to dental offices in Florida has prompted that state's dental association to issue a warning to its members. In the April issue of *Today's FDA*, dentists received erroneous bills from Dentists.org for Internet ads they did not order.

While the problem has only been reported in Florida, it is prudent to keep the front office apprised of advertising purchases and to staff to question bills from web-based companies, especially in these days of Internet scams and spam.



Illustration: Charlie O. Hayward

Honors



Students at the Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health, A.T. Still University of Health Sciences, presented their 2005 Faculty of the Year Award to **A. Jeffrey Wood, DDS**, associate professor and chair of the Department of Pediatric Dentistry at the University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Medicine.



Richard K. Rounsaville, DDS, was installed as president of the Academy of Osseointegration during the organization's recent annual business meeting in Florida. Also elected to the board of directors was Russell D. Nishimura, DDS.

Upcoming Meetings

2005

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| Sept. 9-11 | CDA Fall Session, San Francisco, (866) CDA-MEMBER (232-6362). |
| Sept. 25-28 | Pacific Coast Society of Orthodontists/Rocky Mountain Society of Orthodontists Joint Annual Session, San Diego, www.pscortho.org . |
| Oct. 6-9 | ADA Annual Session, Philadelphia, (312) 440-2500. |
| Oct. 29-30 | California Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons' Fall Membership Meeting, San Francisco, www.calaoms.org ; (800) 500-1332. |
| Nov. 4-6 | Second International Conference on Evidence-Based Dentistry, Chicago, www.icebd.org . |

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| March 15-18 | Academy of Laser Dentistry, Tucson, www.laserdentistry.org . |
| April 27-30 | CDA Spring Session, Anaheim, (866) CDA-MEMBER (232-6362). |
| Sept. 15-17 | CDA Fall Session, San Francisco, (866) CDA-MEMBER (232-6362). |
| Oct. 16-19 | ADA Annual Session, Las Vegas, (312) 440-2500. |
| Dec. 3-6 | International Workshop of the International Cleft Lip and Palate Foundation, Chennai, India, (91) 44-24331696. |

To have an event included on this list of nonprofit association meetings, please send the information to Upcoming Meetings, *CDA Journal*, 1201 K St., 16th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814 or fax the information to (916) 554-5962.