

3-11-10

VOSH INTERNATIONAL BOARD REPORT

DAVID R. MCPHILLIPS, OD, FAAO

- I. VOSH/DELVAL recently returned from a very successful 4 day mission to northern Haiti. While we did not work in areas physically affected by the tragic earthquake, we did see many patients and spoke with other health care organizations in this area who also were in Port au Prince and heard many sad stories of destruction of homes and fatalities. Those who had been working in the earthquake areas stated the number of deaths have been grossly underestimated and 1 million people killed is a more realistic number, with most of these being children.
- II. We were hosted by an organization called Haiti MaryCare, a group run by several nurse practitioners who have been providing health care services for 12 years in a clinic in Jacquesyl in northern Haiti, especially to malnourished children and pregnant women. They have not worked with eye care providers before and had contacted Vosh International several times over the last couple years about adding these services to what they do. Their dozen volunteers, which included nurses and 2 pediatricians, did physical exams, height and weight measurements, and blood pressures, while we did eye exams. On our first day we worked in a clinic in Cap Haitien run by Food for the Poor, which has a large presence in this area with food, education and health care initiatives, especially with so many displaced Haitians from Port au Prince fleeing north. We then worked 2 days in Jacquesyl at the Haiti Mary Care clinic, walking a mile to clinic each day through mud and rainsoaked, potholed dirt roads when our bus could not be driven. And our last day was spent working in an orphanage which normally housed 70 children, but since the earthquake was now home to over 300 adults (who had grown up there as orphans and had no where to go after living in Port au Prince) and children.
- III. One evening we attended the 7th annual meeting of the CapHaitien health network, a network of health organizations working together whenever possible, and each group spoke of what they were doing in the area, and there was a great exchange of information between the 100+ attendees. We examined over 1000 patients, referring 47 for cataracts and 5 for glaucoma surgery. Surgical supplies for these cases were donated by SEE, who have been great partners with each of our missions to Haiti over the past 3 years, and surgeries were performed by local ophthalmologists we have partnered with during the mission and on an ongoing basis afterwards.
- IV. A major reason for this mission was to check the construction status of the planned sustainable full service including optical and surgical, eye clinic we are helping build along with IEF, ICEE and the Haitien doctors. Hopefully this will be complete in the next 6 months.