

## THE FEEDBACK

### FROM MISSION FIELD

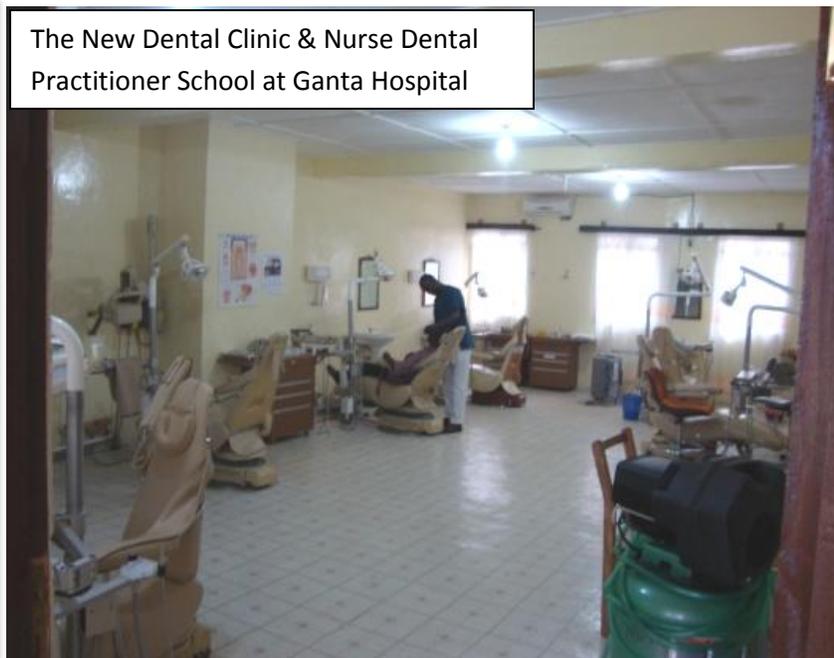
#### TAKING DENTAL CARE TO ANOTHER LEVEL IN LIBERIA

Dear Readers,

Feedback is a Mission Letter from me, Victor Doolakeh Taryor. I am serving as Global Health Missionary in my own country of Liberia. My official assignment with the Liberia Conference is called Hospital Administrator. In this capacity, I have the oversight responsibility of conducting the day to day running of the Ganta United Methodist Hospital located in Ganta, north central Liberia. Ganta lies deep in the interior of Liberia, about some 130 miles from the nation's political capital of Monrovia.



The New Dental Clinic & Nurse Dental Practitioner School at Ganta Hospital



The health care issue addressed in this letter is very crucial to the entire population of Liberia, especially for those living out of Monrovia. Liberia has the total population of 3,476,608 (2008 Population and Housing Census) people with a daunting health history. Currently, Liberia has only 6 dentists and 5 of them live and practice in Monrovia thereby leaving the rest of the rural country side neglected. Out of the 6 dentists, only 2 are Liberians and of the 2 Liberians, the younger is in her mid to late 60 in age. Besides the critical human resource problem that dental care faces in Liberia, its future development remains bleak. Government's priorities listing in health service delivery placed dental health at the very bottom of the pyramid.

At Ganta Hospital, the last Missionary Dentist from the USA departed as a result of the civil conflict in 1990. Since that time only a nursing assistant who helped Dr. Bob Hartland remained until 2003. Rachael Saye, the Nursing Assistant was also forced to migrate to Monrovia where she remains up to this time as a result of the 2003 factional fighting in Ganta. During her several years of working with Dr. Hartland and

other dentists from India and Israel, Rachael learned and became an expert in performing non complicated dental procedures such as extraction, filling, scaling, and in providing oral care education. Sadly enough, when Rachael left, the clinic at the hospital was closed permanently to the public creating a huge gap in our overall health care delivery efforts.

Giving the challenging post conflict situation in Liberia, we know that venturing for a full time dentist at Ganta or in other parts of Liberia is not an achievable objective if we want to meet the dental need of the larger and neglected population. It is out of this thinking that the Dental Nurse Practitioner, DNP training at Ganta was born. The program is a joint and collaborative effort by the Ganta United Methodist Hospital and its many partners including UMCOR Health of GBGM, Dental Care for the World in Memphis Tennessee, USA, United Methodist University in Liberia (through the Winifred J. Harley College of Health Sciences), the Government of Liberia and the Christian Medical College in Ludhiana, India.

The partnership grew so fast than expected and through the grace of God, Dental Care for the World (DCW) partnered with the University of Tennessee Dental School to secure 6 dental chairs and all the infrastructures and supplies it needed to become functional. In July, 2010, a work team comprising 7 persons from DCW and a member of the Memphis Dental Association, Dr. Scott Edwards successfully installed the equipments in the facilities.

Work team visited by Rudolph Merab (Ganta Hospital Governance Committee's Chairman (Left below)



Work team and Hospital staff posed with patient in X-ray chair (Rt. below)



UMCOR Health and Ganta Hospital provided \$12,821.85 USD and \$1,500 UDS respectively to renovate the 4 room facility that is considered today as the best part of our hospital at Ganta. In August 2010, the Christian Medical College in Ludhiana recruited and sent the first pioneer faculty, Dr. Ashwin Sakharia (Dental Surgeon) and it was at this time that the DNP training started. It is very exciting to mention that 3 candidates enrolled for this 2 year diploma program and are doing great in their academic pursuit.

To qualify for enrollment, candidate must have at least one year of working experience as a Registered Nurse or a Physician Assistant. Graduate from the program will sit state registration examination to be administered by the Liberia Medical and Dental Board. We also succeeded in getting the approval of the Minister of Health, Dr. Walter Gwenigale to start such training initiative in Liberia for the very first time.



From L – R Dr. Keith Chapman (Dentist at ELWA Hospital, Liberia), Dr. Walter Gwenigale (Minister of Health), Victor Taryor, Bishop John G. Innis, Rev. Edgar White, Dr. Bernice Dahn, Dr. Scott Edwards, & Suzzane E. Porter

It is worth mentioning that DNP is an emerging medical training initiative for middle level dental technicians and has the vision to train health care workers for every health center/Hospital in Liberia focusing on rural areas. Current candidates/trainees are from John F. Kennedy Medical Center in Monrovia (national tertiary referral center), Phebe Hospital in Bong County and the Curran Lutheran Hospital in Zorzor, Lofa County.

The Government of Liberia through the MOH committed to provide salary for an additional dentist when available. Despite the progress, our challenge is the ability to procure dental supplies and consumables to provide uninterrupted training for the students. The students are part of the Winifred J. Harley College of Health Sciences, so they are admitted in the same dormitories with the basic students doing professional nursing. More rooms are also needed.

Because the lessons are arranged in Modules, adjunct teachers/professors and part t-time instructors finds it easier to get along with the curriculum. The pioneer teacher, Dr. Ashwin ended 7 months of service at the school and is replaced by Dr. Prashant Prasad.

Dr. Prasad and his students in action (a student take X-ray L below and the others work with post operative pt. Rt below



I am thankful to all my supporting churches/covenant relationships for their moral, spiritual and financial supports that are helping to keep us working in the mission field.

**Victor Doolakeh Taryor**

**Global Health Missionary**

**General Board of Global Ministries**

**The United Methodist Church**

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