



WHAT'S ON TAAPP?

NEWSLETTER FOR THE TORONTO ADDIS ABABA PSYCHIATRY PROJECT
SUMMER EDITION 2007 Vol. 1



MESSAGE FROM CLARE PAIN

Dahnasterling to all!

This is our first TAAPP Newsletter and thanks to volunteer Ms. Sarah Mar from CAMH and Dr. Sam Packer our webmaster we hope to have 3-4 newsletters a year. Please feel free to submit anything you feel would be of interest.

(Right) Ethiopian residents evaluating the April TAAPP teaching team.



NEWS

1. The 2007 April teaching trip - with Victor Feder and his wife Betty, Mark Stanford and Jillian Sussman our resident. See their photos and reflections on their experience.

2. Dr. Yilma Yitayew Bekele who is known to many of us from trips out to Addis, is a newly qualified psychiatrist on faculty in the Department of Psychiatry in Addis Ababa. Yilma will be starting his Fellowship year at the University of Toronto this July. He will be bringing his wife and three children with him. This marks phase two of TAAPP during which we hope that the two other new faculty, Drs Yonas and Teshoma will be coming in turn to study with us over the course of the next three years.

3. On May 12th 2007 the documentary, produced by Karen Pinker of 90th Parallel entitled " A Window Opens: Margaret and Sophie in Ethiopia" aired on CTV. In October 2006 Margaret Trudeau, the president of the board of directors of WaterCan, a Canadian charitable organization that builds wells in African villages, brought her daughter-in-law along to visit Ethiopia where the NGO is actively building wells. *Cont'd next column...*

During her visit Margaret went to Amanual Hospital and met with Drs Atalay and Mesfin and some of the patients. It was a moving section of the film, beautifully shot with the privacy of the patients perfectly respected. We are grateful to Karen and to Margaret for her continuing support and interest in TAAPP.

4. New Chief resident: This year the chief resident is Dr Rehana Abdurahman, who is the first woman to be selected for this responsible position. Congratulations Dr Rehana! The photograph of the April Trip includes Rehana in it, she is wearing a peach scarf on the left of the photograph.

5. We hope to have a second fundraising party this Fall/Winter before the Christmas break - this is a call for volunteers interested in organizing a silent auction. We also need a venue! We would like to both celebrate the enormous energy and commitment of so many here in Toronto and in Addis, as well as to welcome Yilma and his family to Toronto for a year.

6. For more news from the Mental Health Society of Ethiopia, please visit: <http://www.mhse.org/wp/>

RECOLLECTIONS FROM ADDIS

Drs Mark Sanford, Victor Feder and Jillian Sussman (psychiatry resident) formed the 11th TAAPP teaching group, ably assisted by Betty Feder - they returned to Toronto in May 2007 after a month in Addis Ababa and share their recollections:



(Above) Jillian Sussman, psychiatry resident on a mule.

Jillian says:

Our trip to Addis in April was an extraordinary experience and I feel very fortunate to have been given the opportunity to be part of this incredible project. Here is a selection of my own memories from our trip: being greeted with welcoming smiles at the airport by Drs. Rehanna and Seesai; witnessing the many weddings taking place in the park and the captivating sound of people singing; piling into the ambulance to travel back and forth from our home to the various hospitals; observing Dr. Mulu tackle the multitude of agitated and frightened emergency patients with calm and composure; Dr. Desalai speaking kindly with an adolescent boy about his mood and worries; co-leading a seminar with Dr. Yonas on Autism Spectrum Disorders with much participation from the residents; being warmly welcomed into the homes of Dr. Rehanna and her relatives during our trip to Harar; in a boat, circling the waters, trying to capture a photograph of a very camera-shy hippopotamus; eating the phenomenal injera and shiro wat at our hosts' homes and friendly neighbourhood restaurant; collaborating with Mark, Victor, and Betty to cook and create our own tasty meals; hiking up the Entoto Mountains by foot and the hills of Lalibella by mule, all the while befriending the surrounding children; watching Mark dance Asmari-style; most of all, the relationships formed with our Addis hosts and with my new friends, Mark, Victor, and Betty.

Mark says:

It was cold and rained in the first week of our visit with blue skies thereafter; I remember being surrounded by smiling, curious children whenever we ventured into the countryside; descending from the monastery above Lalibella and Jillian teaching Canadian camp songs to some of those children who responded with their own songs; a brave hemiplegic child struggling to walk in the outpatient department while his father supported him; the warmth and caring of so many parents struggling to understand and manage the strange or aggressive behaviour of an autistic child; Dr Elizabeth patiently working her way through an avalanche of child patients in the child outpatient clinic at Amanuel Hospital; a child's uncle from Gambella shouting in frustration in broken English at two perplexed Ethiopian residents (Drs Rehanna and Elizabeth) and just this once I was able to interpret for them what he was on about; Dr Solomon telling a joke during his scholarly presentation on chat (quat) chewing and breaking into laughter before the punch-line so that we were all laughing at his difficulty in completing the joke; and especially all the times we faranjies were the source of mirth to our hosts and onlookers whether it was our feeble attempts at Amharic-speak, panting when walking uphill at altitude, or trying to dance Asmari-style. For me, TAAPP was all about the warmth and humor of our hosts, the excitement in teaching and learning in the classroom and clinic, and the pleasure of working with my colleagues Victor, Betty and Jillian.

Victor says:

I remember taking turns for the shower in Addis on weekdays morning, before the ambulance picked us up usually a bit late to drop us at the hospital miraculously on time.

Jillian would shower just on time to gulp her breakfast. Betty did evening showers as her schedule was a bit more flexible. What can I say? I miss it.

The days were full. Full of work, of thoughts and emotions, full of humour and kindness. Full of patients that were full of pathology. Full of residents doing an amazing job and full of dialogues where we all taught and learned.

I remember the sight of a man rowing on a fragile papyrus boat (canoe, really) through Lake Tana carrying a bag of charcoal to the market. I was told it would take him six hours to get there and six more to go back home with what he could buy after selling his charcoal.

At first I thought that the amount of time his trip took him was disproportionate to the simplicity of the task: a bag of charcoal turned into groceries to survive a few days. Then I reflected on how out time goes by here in my modern world: meetings, TV, small talk, picking a new car, reviewing investments or reading a newspaper that usually tells me more of the same.

Twelve hours of rowing seemed to make sense. As much if not more so than of twelve of my hours. Moreover, the man in the lake was not polluting.

I feel this is a metaphor of our trip: three psychiatrist teaching about fourteen residents that will serve eighty million people. Suddenly the whole thing made a lot of sense to me. It still does.

We took a 'bag of charcoal' to Addis, I came back so much richer and -I join Jillian- with three wonderful new friends (I include Clare -the boss- here).

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT TAAPP...

This is what is being said about TAAPP! As first seen in *Canadian Psychiatry Aujourd'hui* June 2007 – Volume 3, No. 3

Lots to learn from overseas training initiative: The Toronto Addis Ababa Psychiatry Project

by Chetana Kulkarni, MD, PGY-5
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Ethiopia is a country that we as North Americans often hear about. For many people, the country's name evokes images of starving children or of political unrest. Like many other countries, mental health issues in Ethiopia have often been overshadowed by other social, political and economic problems, however a joint Canadian-Ethiopian project is working to increase the profile of mental health matters in Ethiopia.

One historical challenge to mental health care in Ethiopia has been the lack of local psychiatry training programs. Physicians interested in psychiatry have had to leave the country to train, and once these physicians leave there are few incentives to return. One of the solutions to this "psychiatry brain drain" was to develop a psychiatry training program in Ethiopia.

It took ten years of advocacy work before the country's first and only psychiatry residency-training program got underway in January 2003. It is a three-year program, with a current class size of seven to 10 residents per year. The first group of residents started in January 2003, and graduated from the program in August 2006. Before this, there were only 12 psychiatrists in the entire country—an average one psychiatrist per 5.83 million people.

The Toronto Addis Ababa Psychiatry Project (TAAPP) is a joint initiative between the University of Toronto and the University of Addis Ababa. The original mission of TAAPP was to provide three months per year of contextually relevant mental health education in order to share the teaching load with the Ethiopian faculty. As such, between 2003 and 2006 TAAPP organized three trips annually, sending two staff psychiatrists and one resident for a month at a time during this first phase of the project.

Canadian psychiatrists provide teaching in many forms, including didactic lectures, journal clubs, clinical supervision of observed and unobserved cases, and clinical skills training through simulated patient encounters.

Teaching the student

I had the amazing opportunity to be one of the first child psychiatry educators in Ethiopia in April 2005. Along with two staff psychiatrists from Toronto (Dr. Mark Sanford and Dr. Susan Dundas), I spent a month teaching Ethiopian residents about the mental health of children.

The child psychiatry consultation clinic at the psychiatric hospital in Addis Ababa opened the day we began. Originally there was some concern that we would not have enough patients—was that ever wrong! We were inundated and had more patients than we could handle.
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(Above) April 2007 teaching trip- Drs. Mark Sanford, Victor Feder and Jillian Sussman and the Ethiopian psychiatry residents. Chief Resident Dr. Rehana (far left).

We often had to send people away and have them return the next day—since appointments are rarely made in Ethiopia; people line up in the morning and hope to be seen.

We also taught the Ethiopian residents on a daily basis—half the day was spent providing clinical supervision; the other half in didactic or clinical skills teaching seminars. As the resident member of the Canadian team, I was responsible for preparing several didactic seminars and I also participated in most of the clinical skills sessions (usually acting as the simulated patient!).

Teaching the resident-teacher

While the program provided an opportunity to teach psychiatry, it also provided the opportunity to learn a great deal about psychiatry practice in Ethiopia. For example, there are a very limited number of medications available in Ethiopia; none of which are the atypical antipsychotics or SSRIs

It was also fascinating to see how similar and how different the expression of mental illness can be in a country worlds away from Canada. The vast majority of our patients didn't seek medical care until all traditional means of healing had failed—coming in for treatment was considered a last ditch effort for a "cure." In a material resource poor country such as Ethiopia, one of the greatest assets for patients turned out to be, their "social capital"—the ability to mobilize people's inner strengths and resilience to support those who are mentally ill.

Of course being in such an interesting country with so much history, we spent our free time on the weekends visiting many amazing sites including the famous rock-hewn churches of Lalibella (if you watch 'Amazing Race' you will recognize these), the giant stele of Axum, the castles of Gondor, riding a boat on Lake Tana (the source of the Nile) and the Blue Nile Falls. *Cont'd next page...*

Other highlights of the trip include riding to work in the ambulance, hanging out with our neighbour the giant turtle, visiting the leprosarium, shopping at the fair, and climbing Mount Zaquale.

Although the trip was tiring and a lot of hard work, it was an amazing opportunity to teach and learn psychiatry, as well as to learn about new cultures, travel to some phenomenal ancient places, meet wonderful people, and have some unforgettable adventures. This trip also provided incredible opportunities for personal and professional development.

The TAAPP project has received much recognition and acknowledgement. The project founder, Dr. Clare Pain, received the University of Toronto Henry Durost Award for Excellence in Creative Professional Activity in June 2005. See www.utoronto.ca/ethiopia to learn more about the TAAPP project.

If you have something you'd like to see in *What's on TAAPP*, please contact Dr. Clare Pain at cpain@mtsinai.on.ca or Ms. Sarah Mar at sharah_mar@camh.net!