



Health Horizons International Progress Report 2011

From the President and Chairman of the Board

Dear friends,

A few weeks ago, Laura reminded me that it had been almost two years to the day since she and Angi moved to the Dominican Republic to begin their year long stay. As I thought about it later, it seemed almost hard to believe. Two years have gone by in a flash and two years have seen HHI grow from two young women learning their way around the D.R. to a vibrant organization with full time staff and volunteers both on the island and in Boston. There are so many good things happening that it is hard to keep track of them anymore.

First and foremost, HHI has a full time presence in the D.R. focused on the four communities we serve. Our mission "...is to provide quality primary health care to underserved patients of the Dominican Republic and to build local capacity for achieving improved community health. Through partnering international medical service trips with community-based health initiatives, we work to promote well-being and access to health care." As you'll read below, we are now fulfilling this mission in ways we could not have imagined two years ago.

Critical to our success is a dedicated group of donors who have supported our efforts most generously. We are committed to excellence in what we do in our service area and are driven to make a long term impact. As the end of the year approaches and our thoughts turn to gift giving, I hope you will join me in supporting this worthy cause. With your help we can continue to bring healing, prevention and hope to a population that has little but its dignity.



Sincerely,
Craig W. Czarsty, MD.

From the Executive Director

Dear friends,

I am delighted to share with you Health Horizons International's first Annual Progress Report. Indeed, HHI is always a work in progress. This is partly because we are still a young organization, but more importantly, it is due to one of our greatest strengths – our ability to truly listen to the people from our partner communities, and grow in response to their experience. Our goals for building a new vision of community health and primary care in the Dominican Republic require a long-term commitment and perseverance in the face of challenge.

All of you who are reading this have given your support – whether a donation, your time and talents, your advocacy for our cause, or your words of encouragement. The reflections, numbers, and voices in this report would not have been possible without you. Thank you so much for joining us in our vision of improving community health in solidarity with the poor of the Dominican Republic. We cannot wait to make even greater strides in the year ahead.



With deepest thanks,
Laura McNulty

Community Health Workers Program

Our community health workers are the key to ensuring continuity of health care for our patients. More than just a training course, our program now provides year-round support to fifteen *cooperadores de salud*, and empowers them with the knowledge and tools to improve the health of their neighbors. Our *cooperadores* understand the daily challenges of accessing medical care and promoting health better than anyone – they are residents of the communities that HHI serves. The Puerto Plata region has fewer than six physicians for every 10,000 residents in the public health care system. By building

a team of skilled community health workers with a holistic view of health, we fill a critical gap for people facing illness and poverty, while also investing in community-based health care professionals.



This year:

- 10 new community health workers trained.
- 12 continuing education classes taught on Nutrition and Exercise, Cholera, Grieving and Loss, and more.
- 1,400 *cooperador* hours dedicated to patient care, community health education, and training.

“Being a community health worker is something beautiful because we can help and guide other people. I feel a responsibility to take care of the people in my community.”

“I never studied medicine, I’m not a doctor or a nurse. But I don’t think you need to be to have the desire to learn, and to learn how to educate people how to be healthy.”

Primary Health Care

Our primary health care field clinics move beyond the short-term medical mission model. Every four months, we collaborate with our four partner communities to bring preventive healthcare services, education, and treatment for both acute and chronic conditions directly to under-served people. We focus on quality and sustainability. Our field clinics now include pre-clinic case finding and appointments, a standardized medication formulary, medical records for all patients, basic diagnostic tools, next-day lab results, and a referral and follow-up system that operates year-round. The field clinics act as a gateway to facilitate continuity for patients who otherwise lack access to high quality primary care.

This year:

- 1,340 primary health care consultations provided
- 15 physicians and 35 students and other volunteers engaged in international service
- 5 local medical interpreters trained and hired for each clinic week



“The whole experience has very much reinvigorated my joy for the practice of medicine.”



Chronic Illness Care

Our focus on continuity of care has led us to tackle complex health problems. Chronic illnesses including heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, account for 68% of all deaths in the Dominican Republic. Prevention efforts are crucial to decreasing the long-term burden of these diseases, as are comprehensive treatment and support programs for individuals who have already been diagnosed. Our Chronic Care Program now provides 85 patients

with year-round access to medication, regular check-ups and monitoring, individualized medication adherence counseling, and support for health behavior change. Our growing prevention efforts focus on the risk factors of poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, tobacco use, and alcohol use. Addressing chronic diseases requires a team approach – we link our community health workers, field clinic volunteers, and local medical and public health partners through a year-round system that works to improve health outcomes for all patients and community members.

This year:

- 85 patients enrolled for hypertension, diabetes, epilepsy, and asthma management
- \$10 spent each month per patient for medication
- 56% of patients with hypertension showed a decrease in blood pressure

“Since being treated by HH, she is a lot better. Before, whenever she laid down at night, she would have an asthma attack. She wasn’t able to sleep at all, and therefore I didn’t sleep either. But now, she uses her inhaler.”

“The two weeks I volunteered in the Dominican Republic served as an intensive course in global health, non-profit management and social work, all in one. I developed relationships with individual patients and facilitated their care, and gained an appreciation for how challenging it can be to work on-the-ground delivering high-quality primary care in developing country settings. I felt I was able to make a meaningful contribution.”

Continuity of Care

When our patients need follow-up visits or specialist care, we provide one-on-one support to help them navigate the local health system and understand their diagnoses and treatment options. We now have a network of local referral partners to connect patients to specialist consults, preventive care, surgery, diagnostic testing and imaging, and other follow-up year-round. Patients may be referred by a physician during the primary care field clinics — then, our volunteers, community health workers, and staff work with each patient and family to ensure they are effectively connected to follow-up care. By prioritizing follow-up home visits and community-based support, we ensure that each patient is treated as a whole person.



This year:

- 215 patients connected to follow-up visits or specialty medical care
- 6 women connected to Ob/Gyn care, the most common specialty referral
- 90% of patients received a home visit from HHI staff or community health workers after a specialist appointment

“For around nine years, I was always in pain since giving birth to my youngest child. I went to an HHI clinic and told them about my pain. They took responsibility for me. I ended up having an operation, and I thank God that it went well and I am no longer in pain. I am so thankful for [HHI staff member] Nicole – she was with me in every instant, every step of the way. HHI has a very important role here.”



Public Health

Our model of primary care would be incomplete without addressing the underlying causes of illness. Our patients suffer from diseases like HIV, tuberculosis, acute respiratory infections, and diarrheal diseases, in addition to chronic illnesses like heart disease and cancer. This dual burden of infectious and non-communicable disease demands an innovative combination of public health and clinical care strategies.

The Dominican health system is mandated to provide crucial public health services like vaccinations, clean water and sanitation, and reproductive health care. Rather than duplicating efforts, we work in partnership with the local system to connect community members to existing services. We then target our own research and prevention efforts to fill the gaps in achieving public health priorities. Our new Healthy Lifestyle Program is designed to alleviate the burden of chronic disease in our partner communities, and we are supporting community efforts to advocate for clean water and sanitation by arming local leaders with the research and data they need. With access to information, our partner communities have a stronger voice to create solutions that strengthen the health system itself.

To maintain high standards of rigor and quality, we incorporate monitoring and evaluation at all stages of our work, including through the use of technology like GIS and electronic medical records. Our research, illness prevention initiatives, and outcomes evaluation demonstrate our long-term commitment to building healthy communities – not just providing medicine.

This year:

- 4 original research studies on public health and clinical topics
- 2 collaborative projects with the Ministry of Health to address dengue fever and cholera outbreaks



- 1 strategic plan developed to guide our public health program growth into the future



Our Team

We count on a strong and growing team of staff, volunteers, community health workers, and local and international partners to reach our vision of health in the Dominican Republic. Our full-time International Program Team includes our Clinical Programs Director, Public Health Director, and Programs & Operations Manager. They are joined by two long-term volunteers, one of whom is serving in the Peace Corps, and several patient care management volunteers and research interns throughout the year. In Boston, our Executive Director is assisted by a Program & Development Intern, and we are fortunate to have an accountant, web designer, and information systems developer as volunteers. We have developed collaborative relationships with numerous individuals and organizations, and are grateful to recognize several of our key partners this year:

- Ministry of Public Health, Puerto Plata Regional Office
- Centro Medico Cabarete
- Hospital La Maternidad Dolores de la Cruz and Hospital Ricardo Limardo
- Centro Diagnostico Montellano and Farmacia Montellano
- Clinica Buen Samaritano and Island Impact, Maranatha
- Hospital Los Alcarrizos, Santiago
- Quinnipiac University Physician Assistant Program
- Tufts University Community Health Program
- Greater Lawrence Family Health Center Family Medicine Residency

Financials

Our progress this year would not have been possible without the generosity of donors. Our staff, Board, and volunteers have worked tirelessly to share HHI's work in the Dominican Republic with supporters near and far. This year, we raised over \$153,000 and we are pleased to be making strides toward growth and financial sustainability for the future. We are grateful to recognize the following institutions for their generous grant support:

- Covidien Partnership for Neighborhood Wellness
- David, Helen and Marian Woodward Fund
- Physician Assistant Foundation
- Stare Foundation

... in addition to the many individuals whose belief in our cause has made our impact possible.



Fiscal Year 2011:

Revenue: \$153,219

Individuals: \$61,032
Institutions: \$69,650
Volunteer Fees: \$21,114
Other: \$1,423

Expenses: \$113,235

Program: \$75,157
Operating: \$31,287
Development: \$6,792

Your donation helps to build a new vision of health in the Dominican Republic.

Checks may be mailed to:
Health Horizons International
c/o Community Health Program, Tufts University



112 Packard Ave.
Medford, MA02155



Donations may also be made online by clicking the button below. Please note that PayPal retains a 3% transaction fee.

[Donate](#)

Thank you for believing in our cause.

HHI is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

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