

Field Notes

Reflections from Honduras

Fellow Man International Foundation

Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever Outbreak Poses Serious Challenge for Fellow Man International and the Honduran Ministry of Health



A soldier enters a residence in Pinalejo and fumigates both the home and the yard for mosquitoes which could transmit the deadly hemorrhagic form of the dengue fever virus.

There is a reason they call Dengue Fever “bone break” fever. The virus that is transmitted from the Aedes mosquito to the human it bites can cause a wide spectrum of symptoms not the least of which is severe bone pain. The high fevers, abdominal cramps and intense bone and joint pain makes this disease one of the more feared tropical illnesses. While the classical form of Dengue fever can leave its victim debilitated for several weeks, it is the hemorrhagic form that often times proves to be lethal. Dengue hemorrhagic fever occurs when a person has already suffered classical Dengue fever at least once. For those who live in endemic areas, the probability of contracting Dengue hemorrhagic fever increases with each subsequent episode.

Dengue hemorrhagic fever causes a severe drop in a person’s platelet count. Usually between the second and third day of intense fevers, the patient begins to develop small breaks in the superficial blood vessels of the skin. It looks like a fine, dark red or purplish rash. Soon however, sometimes within just a few hours, the patient begins to bleed from every orifice as well as internally. The massive hemorrhage causes shock and soon leads to the failure of vital organs. It is a very difficult medical emergency to manage especially with the severe limitations of the Honduran public health system.

As the rainy season began in August, the increase in moisture awoke the mosquito population. Soon, there were mosquito larvae in all of the water tanks for washing clothes and in just about any receptacle that would hold water including old tires and flower pots. Quickly the Center for Public health as well as the Fellow Man clinic noticed a huge increase in the incidence of patients with symptoms of dengue fever. However, shortly thereafter, two confirmed cases of dengue hemorrhagic fever were reported in Pinalejo. Soon, there were six confirmed cases. Leticia Rivas RN/MSN, the Honduran Ministry of Health’s coordinator for the region found herself in a very difficult situation. Pinalejo and the surrounding area was headed toward an epidemic. This serious situation required immediate action. In order to stop the transmission of the Dengue virus, the mosquitoes would have to be eliminated. This implied that health officials would have to go door to door to identify sources of mosquito larvae propagation and insist they be

destroyed. It also required the fumigation of the entire community of Pinalejo as well as any other village in the area that had a confirmed case of Dengue hemorrhagic fever.

Leticia approached Fellow Man for help. The Honduran Ministry of Health had an explosion of confirmed cases of Dengue hemorrhagic on a national level. There were no funds to purchase the necessary insecticide for the fumigation campaign. Leti’s hands were tied. The stress of the situation was evident in the dark circles beneath her eyes. She knew immediate action was required and yet was impotent to respond.

However, thanks to those who have so generously supported the Fellow Man International project, the Foundation board was able to approve the necessary funds to purchase the insecticide and diesel fuel to fumigate the area. The Honduran military provided personnel to operate the fumigation equipment.. Both Center for Public Health officials and FMI clinic staff went door to door with the soldiers to help educate the people about the fumigation process and the need to eliminate any source of standing water that could serve as a nursery for mosquito larvae. There was much excitement in



Above: Soldiers learn to operate the fumigation equipment. Below: The streets were filled with smoke as soldiers fumigated house to house.



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the street as bystanders watched the labor intensive process to rid the village of this health hazard. People gladly opened their doors to the soldiers. You could hear comments such as “Gracias a Dios” (thank God). Every room was sprayed with special attention given to the dark corners of the houses and areas of the yards where mosquitoes hide during the day. In less than two weeks, there were no more cases of Dengue fever. The outbreak was quickly contained and the threat of an epidemic was eliminated thanks to such a timely response. Leticia Rivas wishes to express her profound gratitude on behalf of the Ministry of Health to all of those who made this blessing possible!



Blowfly larvae live beneath the skin of their host, breathing through a small opening. This larvae even had hair!

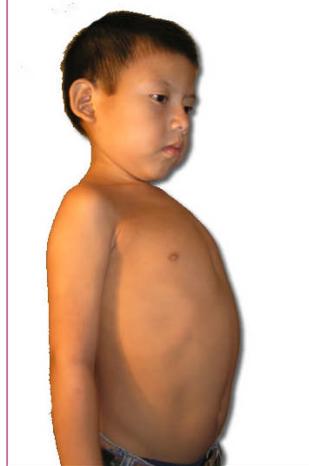
Tropical Medicine - Seeing Is Believing Human Blow Fly Larvae Cause Pain and Suffering for Their Human Hosts

Anyone who raises cattle will recognize a blowfly, however the experience leaves an even greater impression when the problem is found in a five-year-old boy. The little boy had been complaining of a painful lump on the crown of his head for nearly two weeks, when his mother decided to bring him to the clinic for care. After shaving away the hair, it was easy to see there was something moving beneath the child's scalp. It was a human blowfly larva!

There are only two ways to

remove this parasite from its host. One is to make a small incision over the lump and then apply pressure to force the larva to release its hooks which anchor it to the host's flesh. The other method is to cover the larva's breathing hole which will force it to leave in search of air. Both methods are painful, but not nearly as painful as the continual biting sensations the victim feels as the larva feeds on the host's living flesh. The blowfly larva secretes a mucus that acts almost as if it were an antibiotic. Usually,

the patient does not develop an infection but instead seeks help due to the pain. Sometimes people turn to home remedies which can be very dangerous. Desperate parents have been known to use poisons or medications designated for livestock, which can have especially devastating consequences for young children. In this case though, with the help of a little local anesthetic, the larva was removed without much difficulty. Glad to be free of the moving bump on his head, the little boy left with a smile!



Sadly, this is a typical case of Kwashiorkor. Notice the puffy face and swollen belly.

Malnutrition - A Child's Worst Enemy

Recently I had a conversation with a woman that might just change the way I look at my plate for the rest of my life. She came to the clinic with three of her children. They were all malnourished. While tears ran down her cheeks she confessed that her family had not eaten for the last three days. She said she was at the end of her rope because the children were looking to her for food this morning and she once again had nothing to give to them. Somewhere between anger and anguish she screamed at her little ones to stop looking at her because they knew very well she had no food for them. She told me that she had locked herself in her room to escape her children's eyes which pleaded for her to provide something...anything... if even a tortilla with only salt.

Then she said the thing that broke my heart, "I am telling this to you because I know that you will understand." I

was flooded with guilt. Apparently my heart's hidden shame was evident on my face. The woman asked me what was wrong. I decided to tell her the truth. I said, "I really **don't understand** because I have never been hungry...not ever." Even then, this poor woman showed great mercy and kindness to me. She laughed at my comment and said, "Well there you go, you see we are the same. You can not understand me because you have never been hungry. I can not understand you because I have always been hungry."

Hunger has many different forms in this area. Sometimes it is the lack of food quantity. Other times, it is a lack of food quality. Much of the time it is both. There are two definitions of malnutrition commonly used here. Kwashiorkor's is defined as a protein deficient state in which the person has thinning of the hair, edema, ascites and

sometimes organ compromise. Marasmus generally indicates a lack of adequate calories. Its victim is generally very thin, has very little body fat and perhaps some muscle wasting. Both types of malnutrition in children if left untreated and allowed to become chronic can permanently affect a child's future intellectual capacity and academic performance. Chronic anemia also has the same effect. Due to huge increases in fuel prices, basic grains prices have also skyrocketed. Many families simply can not afford to feed themselves. It is a difficult thing to see the steady decline of a child's health and know that the remedy is simply having enough food to eat. In the clinic, malnourished children receive medications for parasites, vitamins and food from the trade store. The parents are encouraged to bring the child every fifteen days to be weighed which ensures the malnutrition does not become chronic.

Lunch for All - Small Investment, Huge Return for Local School Children

In July of this year, a note was sent to FMI from the director of the grade school in Buenos Aires. The supply of basic grains such as corn, rice and beans had been depleted. The school lunch program was at risk. The director wanted to know if FMI could provide the necessary basic grains to keep the program going. Knowing that for many children, school lunch is the only meal of the day, it seemed very important to provide whatever support in the way of foodstuffs necessary. The cost on a monthly basis is five

hundred dollars to ensure that the over 140 school children attending have at least one well-balanced, hot meal a day. The FMI budget did not have school lunches included, yet the Foundation board agreed to designate the necessary funds to purchase additional foods for the school.

The very next day, food purchases were made. Children came running to the vehicle to help carry the food to the kitchen. You could hear laughter and shouts of joy as the kids crowded around the truck to see what kinds of

things would be included in their lunches. Fellow Man purchased the following: corn, beans, rice, milk, sugar, spices and oil. The agriculture project continues to provide meats and vegetables as well. The teachers commented that the kids seemed to know when the lunch hour was near as they sneaked peeks out the window of the school toward the kitchen during class lectures. We appreciate so much your generosity, which enabled us to meet the needs of the school kids. Thank You!



Agriculture assistant, Augustin Melgar hands the boxes and bags of food to the very happy school children who were more than ready to lend a hand!



Hunger Facts from Honduras According to the Pan American Health Organization

- Honduran children between the ages of 12 months to five years of age have an average incidence of chronic malnutrition of 36.4% in rural areas.
- In low income Honduran families, 46.2% of all children under five years of age are malnourished.
- Children of illiterate Honduran mothers who never attended school are twelve times as likely to suffer malnutrition.
- Global chronic malnutrition among children under five years of age is on average 18.4% versus 46.2% for Honduran children of the same age category.
- Local studies demonstrated that 70% of Honduran children between the ages of 6 to 24 months had some degree of anemia.

“Five hundred dollars a month from FMI will ensure that over 140 school children have at least one well-balanced, hot meal a day”

Birthing Babies and Making a Difference

Sometimes big changes arise from tiny beginnings. Mothers know if they come for regular prenatal check-ups their babies are more likely to be healthy. Yet, sometimes “knowing” just isn’t enough. Sometimes there needs to be an incentive to change even if the incentive is really only symbolic. For several years now, different women’s sewing and knitting groups have been making baby quilts and adorable crochet hats to be given to new mothers upon

the birth of their babies. Many mothers come with only a small plastic sack of goods to welcome their tiny packages. Usually it is merely the essential: two diaper pins, two cloth diapers, a small cotton baby shirt and something red to keep the “evil eye” away. But when the nurses pull out a new quilt and a knitted hat for the newborn, you can just see the mother’s eyes shine, something really nice, stitched with love as if to say, “welcome to

the world”. Word has gotten around about the hand-made gifts sent from those abroad. It serves as an incentive for those women who are at risk such as young mothers or those who are especially poor with many children. In the last several months births at the clinic (and a few midnight births in Lisa’s bed at home) have been on the rise. Thanks to good prenatal care and early detection of problematic pregnancies, the miracle of birth has been just that!



Proof that quality prenatal care can make a difference in the health of newborn babies born in rural areas.



Field Notes

Green Parrot Coffee Inaugurates Phase II Solar Dryers and Green Coffee Exportation



There was much excitement in the air as coffee producers from all over the mountain gathered to help inaugurate the second phase of the Green Parrot Coffee project. This year, new structures were added to the already existing roasting facility in which will increase the quality of our roasted product and provide producers with the opportunity to directly export their green coffee to the United States beneath the canopy of the Fair Trade coffee auspices. Among the new structures are: a drying patio, an environmentally controlled warehouse for coffee storage and finally, six solar dryers which maintain optimal drying conditions.

Officials from the Honduran Institute of Coffee (IHCAFE) were present to help orient coffee producers as to proper handling/ processing methods of coffee cherries prior to delivery of washed coffee in "oro" to the Green Parrot facility. Producers also received orientation regarding coffee cupping procedures realized in the Institute's cupping laboratory. Producers who participated last year in the coffee competition received their official certification from the Institute. Every producer in the area qualified for high grown with a few

grower's coffee classified as strictly high grown and fantasy grades. Prizes were given to the top three producers of the highest quality coffee. The atmosphere was light and there was much hope for the future of coffee cultivation in the area. Producers agree that it will be a very good day when they are paid according to the quality of their product instead of one price for all regardless of coffee quality or classification. Thanks to GPC efforts in quality processing, several local producers were chosen to compete in the Excellence Cup with electronic auction in July hosted by IHCAFE.



Professional cuppers from the Honduran Institute of Coffee came to the inauguration demonstrating the classification techniques used to cup coffee.



Above: Midlife Men on a Mission group poses for a picture while delivering much needed medications for the clinic.

Below: Anxious school children wait to see their new school uniforms which were sewn by the women's sewing group.



Midlife Men on a Mission Return

The Midlife Men on a Mission from Fairfax Presbyterian church in Fairfax, Virginia once again traveled to Pinalejo and Buenos Aires for their yearly mission. Just as the wise men came bearing gifts to the baby Jesus, the Midlife Men came bearing gifts of medicines, school uniforms and heavy labor! The group brought many valuable medications including some special antibiotics and drugs used to treat advanced diabetes. The youngest member of the group had worked very hard to raise money to purchase vitamins including children's chewables with iron. Also, the group brought suitcases full of school uniforms for next year that were lovingly sewn by a women's sewing group from the church. The children's eyes widened and gleamed with excitement as the bags of uniforms were unpacked. It was all the director of the school could do to hold the kids back. They were ready to put on the uniforms right then and there! Four members of the team also stayed

behind to work on the new school construction. The team donated two thousand dollars toward the purchase of materials for the school construction. An additional donor gave \$5,000.00 to assist in the costs of both materials and labor. It is our hope that before the start of the new school year in February of 2009, that the first two new classrooms be completely finished.

Thank you for giving hope and placing education first!



This young man sent letters to family and friends, raising over \$1,000.00 to purchase vitamins for the clinic. What a great job!

Fellow Man International Clinic Welcomes Two New Physicians



FMI welcomes two new doctors to the clinic in Buenos Aires. Dr. Marvin Pineda has decided to return to the

mountain after having worked for two years in the city of San Pedro Sula. He has missed the mountain and the feeling of satisfaction in serving the poor. He plans to make his permanent home in Quimistan, a town close to Buenos Aires. He is an excellent physician with much

valuable experience in family medicine. We are so very glad to have him back! Dr. Jose Oviedo works full time at the hospital in Sula, but has joined our team part time on Thursdays and Fridays. This will allow the clinic to expand its medical program into the areas of education and preventative medicine. Dr. Oviedo will travel to all of the villages in the clinic's service area to evaluate the children's nutritional status, assure every pregnant woman is receiving prenatal care and give educational programs. Education is sorely needed in the areas of nutrition, family planning, safe food and water handling as well as first aid. More news to come soon!



Clinic Life Is Like a Box of Chocolates You Say?

Every day is an adventure in the clinic. As Forest Gump once said, "life is like a box of chocolates, you just never know what you are going to get". That accurately describes our clinical condition as well. Each and every day brings a whole new perspective to medicine as patients seek care for a variety of illnesses, many complicated by malnutrition and delayed treatment. On any given day,

the waiting room might contain any blend of the following: a diabetic, a gunshot victim, a child with pneumonia, a pregnant woman either for prenatal check-up or in labor, a machete wound, or a malnourished child with parasites and dysentery to name only a few. Patients seem to be coming from further and further away these days, often times with mystery illnesses that have been undiagnosed

for years. The public health system in Honduras is in great distress at this time. Residents and interns as well as specialists in the two major public hospitals have been on strike for the last four months which brings an even heavier load of very sick patients to our door. There is such desperation in their eyes and yet hope that they will not be turned away! What a blessing it is to open our doors and welcome God's children in!

A Word from Marshall

Uneasiness creates fear! In the US, it's the financial condition and in Honduras, it's the political situation. Although we cannot influence the conditions in which we live, we can control our responses to those conditions.

The needs of the mission have increased, due to the hiring of a second physician and increased demand for services, namely for medications, food assistance and fumigation against mosquitoes. The Foundation's plans are simple and direct. In order to maintain stability in FMI opera-

tions: 1) The Foundation will continue to support and advocate for FMI 2) The Foundation will conduct a fund-raising campaign in November, the second annual 3) The Foundation will provide counsel and guidance to Lisa when requested 4) The Foundation will seek to establish support groups in communities where Foundation Board members reside.

The first year of the Foundation's activities have succeeded in providing on-going support for the operations and have collected donated medical

equipment in such quantity to fill a 40 foot sea container, then raised funds necessary to ship the container to FMI.

Generous support from hundreds of people have made possible these accomplishments. Continuing support is essential to maintain operations.

Thank you!

Marshall Stanton, President, FMI Foundation



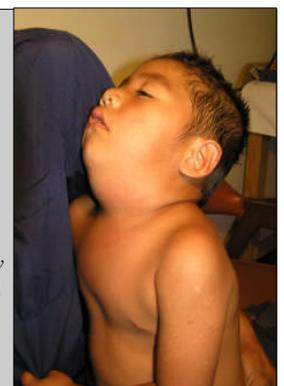
This child had a severe case of Impetigo, a skin infection usually caused by a Staph bacteria. Antibiotics provided the cure.



This woman has Grave's disease. She had many symptoms including a very fast heart rate and weight loss.



This little boy had a severe allergic reaction. His father brought him to the clinic in respiratory distress. A very scary situation!



Love in Action for the Benefit of Our Fellow Man

Living With Uncertainty - Reflections from the Field



I will never forget the words of one of the poor of this mountain when asked how she dealt with the uncertainty of meeting even the most basic of all human needs on a daily basis. She said, “you get used to it”. At the time, I was unable to comprehend such a foreign concept especially being of the *type A personality* persuasion. Yet, there was a certain wisdom in her coping mechanism. I can assure you that her circumstances were far beyond what most of us would consider to be

hopeless. The very idea of her being able to pull herself up by her bootstraps would be ludicrous because of the many factors which nailed her straps to the floor of abject poverty. Recently, the minister of public health announced that the highest risk group in Honduras for extreme poverty were illiterate, indigenous women living in remote rural areas with large numbers of children. Those words, in a nutshell, describe the majority of women living in these mountains which surround the clinic.

So how is it that they manage to smile? How is it that they manage to experience the joy of their children when tomorrow is so uncertain? The bible says, “*can worry add even one minute to your life...why worry about the concerns of tomorrow when today has enough worries of its own*”. It’s hard for me to abandon my worries about the future of this mission in the midst of reports from the States of the biggest financial crisis since the Great De-

pression. Perhaps the hardest thing to reconcile is what it would be like to have to leave these people whom I love and call my family. It puts knots in my stomach to think about all of the “what if’s” that could negatively affect this beacon of hope that has been sitting atop the mountain for the last eight years. And yet, I recognize just as do the poorest of women who live here there are so very many things that are simply beyond our control. So, how to live in this terrible environment of uncertainty. There are financial worries all over the world. Honduras is grappling with grave political concerns. It is enough to make this Dorothy from Kansas stomp her feet and scream at the top of her lungs, “there is no place like home”.

And yet, at two o’clock in the morning yesterday, when a frightened, young mother from the mountain found her way to my home, giving birth to a beautiful baby boy (all over my very best bedspread), I couldn’t help but think, that all of the *what if’s* in the world could not steal away the perfection and utter joy of that moment. I was where I was meant to be, doing what I believe God meant for me to be doing. And that was all that was required to live with this uncertainty we call life!

Thank you with all my heart for all that you do to help keep our doors open and precious hope for tomorrow alive.

God bless you all, Lisa

There is not enough
darkness in all the world
to put out the light of
even one small candle.

- Robert Alden

