



Grace!

WINTER 2007

AT WORK IN HAITI & THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy.

Psalm 28:6 (NIV)

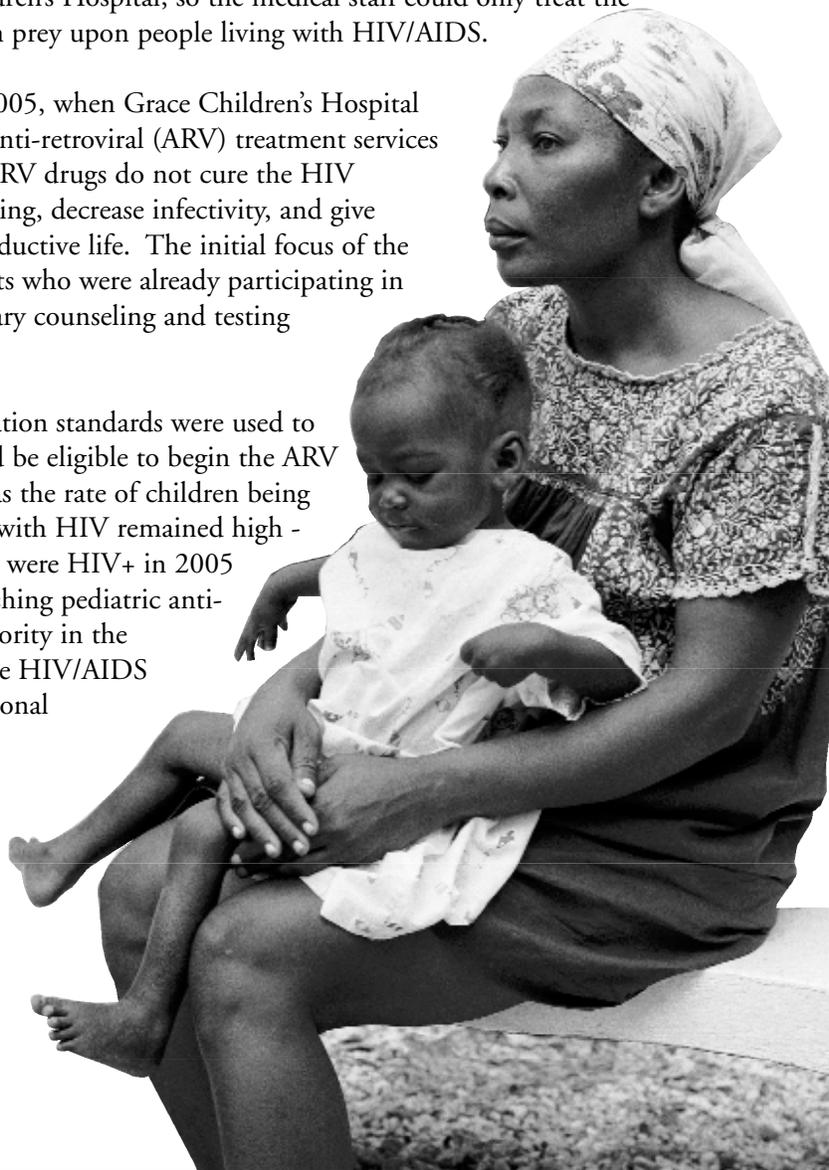
Bringing Hope and Compassion through HIV/AIDS Treatment

In 1990, in response to the alarming spread of HIV/AIDS among the people of Haiti, Grace Children's Hospital began to test every child who was admitted to the inpatient ward for HIV. A few years later, in 1994, the hospital also established a voluntary counseling and testing program for adults. The purpose of this program was to provide free HIV tests, psycho-social counseling, and group therapy. In addition, HIV+ people were eligible for food aid from the hospital, which was provided by the UN World Food Program. At that time, pharmaceutical treatment for HIV/AIDS was not available at Grace Children's Hospital, so the medical staff could only treat the opportunistic diseases that often prey upon people living with HIV/AIDS.

That changed on February 3, 2005, when Grace Children's Hospital celebrated the inauguration of anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment services for HIV+ patients. Although ARV drugs do not cure the HIV infection, they can relieve suffering, decrease infectivity, and give children and adults years of productive life. The initial focus of the treatment program was on adults who were already participating in the hospital's outpatient voluntary counseling and testing program.

A set of World Health Organization standards were used to determine which patients would be eligible to begin the ARV course of treatment first. But, as the rate of children being admitted to the inpatient ward with HIV remained high - 21.8% of the children admitted were HIV+ in 2005 - it became evident that establishing pediatric anti-retroviral care was also a top priority in the development of a comprehensive HIV/AIDS treatment program for International Child Care. ▶

HIV+ mothers and their children benefit from International Child Care's Healthy Birth Program and HIV/AIDS treatment and counseling services.



In the Caribbean...

250,000
people are
estimated to be
living with HIV

74 people are
newly infected with
HIV each day

19,000 people
died of HIV in
2006

UNAIDS 2006

"Haiti is making steady, if slow, progress in providing anti-retroviral therapy to people in need, mainly because of the pioneering work of nongovernmental organizations."

(UNAIDS 2006)

International Child Care is currently undertaking an effort to treat the HIV+ children on the inpatient ward at Grace Children's Hospital with appropriate doses of ARV medications. Rather than separating these children from the other patients and intensifying misconceptions and stereotypes about people with HIV/AIDS, they are placed in beds in the regular inpatient ward or ICU, depending on the severity of their condition. Another reason for integrating the HIV+ children with the others is that most have other illnesses such as tuberculosis, malnutrition, or pneumonia at the time of their admittance. The integrated approach also extends to the staff members, who receive ongoing special training in how to care for HIV+ patients so that the regular staff members can continue to care for all patients.

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The children who come to Grace Children's Hospital testing HIV+ contracted the disease through mother-to-child transmission, where an infected mother passes the disease to her child during labor and delivery, or through breastfeeding. Because of the high risk of transmission during labor and delivery, C-section delivery is common for HIV+ mothers in North America and decreases transmission by as much as 50%. However, this is not practical in resource-poor countries like Haiti and would significantly increase the already staggering maternal morbidity and mortality rates.

Transmission could also be decreased through feeding infants formula instead of breastfeeding,

but this is problematic in a country where there is inadequate access to clean water and much of the population lives in abject poverty. Another issue is that many infected pregnant and breastfeeding mothers do not even know they are HIV+ and therefore do not seek treatment.

In spite of these obstacles, HIV+ mothers and their children do benefit from services such as ARV treatment and ICC's Healthy Birth Program. HIV+ mothers need and receive careful evaluation and monitoring of their health status as well as health education through the Healthy Birth Program. Infants of HIV+ mothers benefit from growth and nutritional monitoring, vitamin supplementation and immunizations. Voluntary testing and counseling, like that offered at Grace Children's Hospital, are also essential elements in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The hospital's Voluntary Counseling and Testing Center reached its two hundred and fifty-sixth beneficiary on September 30, 2006, and 162 of them were women and children. When a mother knows there is hope through treatment, she is much more willing to come forward for testing. ●



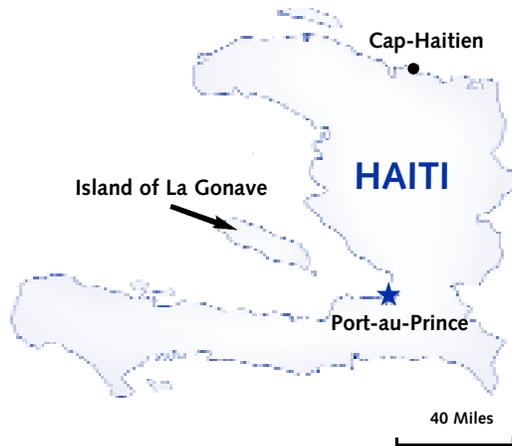
A loving mother comforts her child at Grace Children's Hospital.

The Gift of Love

Remembering Nancy

It's been 10 years since little Nancy Solomon died, but there is at least one person who still vividly remembers her bright smile and generous spirit: Nancy Osgood, an American missionary who shared both a name and special bond with this Grace Children's Hospital patient.

"I never knew that my name was going to attach me to a person," Osgood said, but in 1996, that's exactly what happened. Osgood and her husband, Rev. Bob Osgood, worked as missionaries at the Methodist Guest House in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. One day, as they were visiting friends on the island of La Gonave (about 40 miles northwest of Port-au-Prince), they came to the home of little Nancy, a ten-year-old orphan who lived with her grandmother. Nancy was very sick, her small frame covered with sores, and the Osgoods offered to take her back to the mainland to Grace Children's Hospital for treatment. Her grandmother was reluctant to be away from little Nancy, but finally agreed. After making the dangerous four-hour trip across the water in a rowboat to Petite Goave and another two hours by car over Haiti's



"The respect and love Nancy received made her blossom, and she adjusted to being away from her home and grandma so quickly because the staff at Grace were so kind to her."

rough roads back to Port-au-Prince, the Osgoods finally made it to the hospital with the child.

The doctors at Grace soon diagnosed little Nancy with tuberculosis and HIV, a deadly combination of diseases. Though she doesn't know for sure, Osgood suspects that Nancy may have contracted HIV from her mother, since both parents had already died. With this grim prognosis, the Osgoods were surprised when they returned to Grace Children's Hospital later that week to find Nancy's health improving after a few days of nutritious food and medical care. Not only that, but according to Osgood, "The respect and love Nancy received made her blossom, and she adjusted to being away from her home and grandma so quickly because the staff at Grace were so kind to her."

It was this experience that made Osgood realize how quickly some basic health care can bring a child back from death's door—and how quickly they can die without that care. "Grace did marvelous things for Nancy!" Osgood recalled with feeling. The Osgoods came to visit her several times throughout her stay at Grace, which lasted for several months. They always brought cookies or some small treat for her, and soon learned that they better bring enough for all the kids, because Nancy would joyfully share her goodies with her fellow patients before eating one herself.

Sadly, because she was HIV+ (and this was 10 years ago, before anti-retroviral medications were available), there was only so much that the doctors and nurses could do for Nancy's illnesses. She was released, much improved, and returned home to La Gonave. A couple months later, the Osgoods heard over their radio communication system that her health was again failing. They went to the island as soon as they could and began the arduous trip toward Grace Children's Hospital once again, but little Nancy died during the journey.

At Nancy's funeral, the Osgoods reflected on her loving spirit and the blessing that Grace Children's Hospital was, even though they could not save her life. "Those were some of the best months of her life, while she was at Grace," Osgood shared, and in little Nancy's difficult circumstances, knowing that she was loved and cared for in every way possible was the best gift that she could have received. ●

Newslines – Textile Bill in U.S. Congress Heartens Haitian-Americans

Haitian-Americans seeking economic development in their impoverished homeland are encouraged by a House bill designed to increase Haiti's textile trade with the United States. The Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act passed in the U.S. House of Representatives last month and now moves to the Senate.

This act would allow certain apparel to enter the United States duty-free, even if the materials used to make the garments originated in a third country, such as China. One-tenth of Haitian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) comes from garment exports and Haitians working in the textile industry possess the buying power to help stimulate the Haitian economy.



AMAZING GRACE

Seven-year-old Schneider is the youngest of five children. His mother died three years ago, from tuberculosis that was left untreated, so he and his siblings live with their father and an aunt. According to his father, Schneider has always been a sickly child. But when Schneider developed a persistent fever, nausea, diarrhea, and cough his father knew he was seriously ill.

After taking Schneider to several medical centers throughout Haiti without any concrete diagnosis or measurable improvement, Schneider's father finally brought him to Grace Children's Hospital on September 13, 2006.

Schneider was examined at Grace's outpatient Pediatric Clinic, but was then quickly transferred to the inpatient ward. He was diagnosed with pulmonary tuberculosis and presented signs of severe malnutrition. A few days later, more advanced lab tests revealed he was also HIV positive.

Thanks to the diligent care administered by the medical staff and Schneider's excellent appetite for the well-balanced diet given at the hospital, he is getting along better than expected. He is gaining weight and growing stronger each day.

Schneider is a cheerful little boy who shows a special attachment to the teacher of the Grace school. His wish is to keep going to the little classroom, even after he is well enough to be released. Meanwhile, he enjoys playing with his friends on the ward and looks forward to his father's weekly visits.



Schneider Lejeune



Grace! is published quarterly for friends of International Child Care. ICC is a Christian health agency working in Haiti and the Dominican Republic to change conditions which make people sick, hungry, unemployed and afraid.

ICC depends on individuals, churches, and donor agencies for the financial means to serve. A response card and envelope are enclosed for your contributions. Your gift will be receipted for income tax purposes.

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UMCOR Advance Projects:

Grace Children's Hospital: 418520-7
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Child to Child Health Promotion: 418242-1