Medical Mission Trip

The purpose of this mission trip is to improve the knowledge of the medical professionals of Haiti about lymphedema filariasis with hopes of combating this disease and improving the lives of those suffering.

This mission trip will last approximately one week with subsequent follow up visits in order to ensure that the health professional have adequate supplies and are implementing appropriate intervention strategies.

Lymphedema supplies and educational materials will be taken to Haiti in order for the healthcare workers to be equipped to handle this complex and horrific condition.

Ways to Help

There are several ways that you can get involved in this mission trip:

Donations Needed
- Monetary contributions
- Mosquito nets
- Compression therapy materials
  - Short stretch bandages
  - Komprex
  - Grey Foam
  - Padding supplies
  - Stockinette
  - Garments
- Low pH lotion—Eucerin

Attending Medical Mission Trip—An extra set of eyes and hands can truly make a difference regardless of experience with lymphedema or in the medical field.

For more information please contact the leader of this mission trip Cally Tejkl at (402)-372-8042 or e-mail cm.tejkl@gmail.com.

Check out the organization’s website at www.mohhaiti.org.

We look forward to hearing from you!
What is lymphatic filariasis?
Lymphatic filariasis is a parasitic disease caused by microscopic, thread-like worms. The adult worms only live in the human lymph system. The lymph system maintains the body’s fluid balance and fights infections. Lymphatic filariasis affects over 120 million people in 73 countries.

What are the signs and symptoms of lymphatic filariasis?
The larvae of the adult worm can cause interruptions in the lymphatic system resulting in fluid collection and swelling. This mostly affects the legs, but can also occur in the arms, face, trunk and genitalia. The swelling and the decreased function of the lymph system make it difficult for the body to fight germs and infections. Affected persons will have more bacterial infections in the skin and lymph system. This causes hardening and thickening of the skin. In addition, this swelling can cause difficulty with ambulation, decreased quality of life, and multiple subsequent medical conditions.

Prevention Methods
Avoiding mosquito bites is the best form of prevention. The mosquitoes that carry the microscopic worms usually bite between the hours of dusk and dawn. The individuals of Haiti can protect themselves by sleeping under a mosquito net, wearing long sleeves or trousers, and using mosquito repellent on exposed skin.

Treatment for Lymphatic Filariasis
Once an individual has this condition, there is no cure as the damage to the lymph system has been done. However, in order to rid the lymph system of the larvae, the individual can take an antibiotic called diethylcarbamazine (DEC), that kills the microscopic worms circulating in the blood.

Following the appropriate dosage of DEC, the individual can then significantly reduce the size of the affected extremity through the gold standard treatment protocol known as Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT).

Complex Decongestive Therapy
The goal of the therapy is to reduce the swelling and to maintain the reduction. CDT shows long-term results and is composed of 4 main components:

1. Manual Lymph Drainage (MLD) - gentle manual treatment technique that improves the activity of the lymph vascular system. With patients with lymphedema, this technique reroutes the lymph flow around the blocked areas into more centrally located healthy lymph vessels, which drain into the venous system.

2. Compression Bandaging—In order to prevent re-accumulation of fluid, it is necessary to apply sufficient compression to the affected extremity. This can be done through bandages and garments.

3. Skin Care—The skin of patients with lymphedema is more susceptible to infections. The goal is to avoid bacterial and fungal growth and subsequent infections and to supply moisture to the dry skin.

4. Therapeutic Exercise—Movement improves lymph circulation and can help prevent the re-accumulation of fluid.