

## A PRIMER FOR THE SHORT-TERM MISSIONARY TO HAITI

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If you are reading this you have probably committed to visiting Haiti for short-term missionary work. May God richly bless you for your decision....and he will! The following are a few general considerations to help make your experience a fruitful and satisfying one. We ask you to study these closely and to prepare by abiding by the few simple recommendations we've set forth here.

Your trip is intended to minister to the spiritual and physical needs of the poor we come to serve in the area in and around Joliver t, Haiti where our clinic and mission compound is situated. Your witness and example to them is of the utmost importance. We are an evangelical organization dedicated to the lifting up of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ and of spreading the good news of His grace and mercy to the spiritually lost of Haiti. Pray for guidance by the Holy Spirit during your brief stay, as you will be working in a country largely dedicated to the Vodou ("voodoo") cult. Please be "prayed up" for your trip, as you can expect contact with these satanic forces, and you must be prepared , in the power of the Spirit, to meet and overcome them. Satan is subtle and devious, and he will attack....through your fatigue, your hardships, your unfamiliarity with a strange culture, and even through your compassion for those you have come to serve. But have no fear! "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."

### SOME INTRODUCTORY ADVICE AND COMMENTS

Remember, you are a missionary. Please act like one. You serve the King of Kings and should act as he did when He became a servant to lead men and women to His Father. Humble yourself. You will have travelled many miles and gone to considerable expense and personal sacrifice to serve....not to be served. To love....not to be loved. And to be humble....not to exalt yourself. The Haitians you interact with will regard you as a missionary and they will expect the same conduct and witness from you as they would from a resident or long-term missionary. You are a foreign guest in their land....one of a tiny minority. This fact in itself can be an humbling and instructive experience for most Americans. Be grateful and appreciative of every small act of kindness or hospitality, and remember that you are owed neither. Try not to complain of petty discomforts. Remember you are likely going to be there for only a few days and will return to the comforts of the U.S.A. soon enough. Look for opportunities to help out, no matter how menial the task. Avoid the mind-set of "you must do it this way," since what works at home may very likely not work at all in Haiti, or the means of doing it your way may not even be available or even practical. Attempt to learn from these (more often than not) poverty-stricken people something of their special brand of courage in dealing with the enormous obstacles life faces them with daily. And never mistake ignorance from lack of intelligence. Above all, avoid a prideful attitude. They don't need to be reminded of the differences between life in America and life in Haiti. Many Haitians

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already think the streets are paved with gold in Miami, although Haitians living in Miami, New York or Boston are often existing at poverty levels not much different from those in their homeland. They are a proud people and know how poor they are, and are generally doing the best they know how....so speak less of yourself and America and more of them and of their need to know Jesus Christ. Never make the mistake of making derogatory or demeaning remarks as some Haitian may be within earshot; and many of them understand more English than they would like for you to think. Such remarks, such thinking is simply inappropriate.

Work hard to understand the culture by being open and asking lots of questions....history, family traditions, work, recreations, and faith. Do NOT become embroiled in political issues. Be sensitive to their cultural oddities and taboos. Customs of dress and social behaviors are very important to the Haitian people. If in doubt, ask your team leader. Be appreciative of the people and the time they give you out of their lives. Visit them in their homes, shops, churches, etc. where you can truly get to know them more intimately. Use an interpreter whenever possible, but also make a special effort to learn some commonly –used phrases in Creole. Don't worry about mispronunciations....it pleases them that you care enough to try to learn. They may laugh at your efforts, but only always in fun. Join in the fun and laugh with them. They love humor and playing jokes, so season everything with a little of it. Smile a lot and always be positive. A pained expression or a long face can poison the whole group....and it certainly won't make your experience any better. Bottom line: do more than your share, keep a positive attitude, serve hard, volunteer a lot, and keep a servant's attitude. Remember, you only have a few days. If problems, discomforts or difficulties arise, you'll soon be out of it, regardless of the outcome.

Haitians have very clear preconceived notions of how a Christian should act. Use of tobacco or alcohol is prohibited on all trips. Ladies should wear dresses, skirts, blouses or culottes. Footwear should be modest and comfortable. Either sandals, clogs or tennis shoes are appropriate. Women in short pants, tight jeans, scanty sundresses or sleeveless blouses are thought of as "loose." Avoid flashy jewelry or excessive makeup. Body-piercing rings or studs and tattoos are offensive to Haitian Christians. For men, long shorts are finally coming into style, but should never be worn to church or when attending to business. A dress shirt and tie is de rigeur when speaking at church. Most Haitian men dress in their very best clothing for church; even suits and dress shoes. (A tip for the ladies: a Good Will or seconds store is an excellent place to shop for your trip. Many short term visitors choose to share much of their clothing and shoes with their new found Haitian lady friends when leaving). Any swim wear should only be worn when bathing in the river publicly, and should be modest....no two-pieces or bikinis please.

As in any wanderings about the countryside, bathing should also be done in pairs or more. Wear a skirt, towel or parua to and from the bathing site, as modesty is a big issue with your hosts. Always exhibit careful precautions in dealing with members of the opposite sex on your trips. By their culture, Haitians of both sexes are highly sexually motivated, so even the most innocent gesture can sometimes be taken as an invitation for a "response." Needless to say, any romantic or sexual involvement with either Haitians or fellow group-members is absolutely forbidden. This is NOT what you came for.

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Again, please make every attempt to master at least some basic greetings and other commonly-used phrases in Creole. (see my addendum of these in subsequent pages in this manual). It will greatly enhance your witness with the people you serve, work with and worship with. I have also included a short phrase-book of medical terms for medical workers following the above mentioned addendum. You'll find a number of youngsters of all ages eager to help "teach" you some Creole, and this is an excellent way to learn, as they are very patient and will keep correcting you until you have it just right. But remember that many of them will use this means as an effort to pump you for promises of personal support or gifts to be sent in or brought in "on your next visit." PLEASE make no promises you cannot or do not intend to keep. Discourage begging with a smile and a gentle reminder, "Pa mande-m," (Don't beg), or, "M-pa bay lajan." (I don't give out money). Also, under no circumstances are you to promise ongoing financial aid or support to ANY Haitian who approaches you for same without first consulting your group leader. In fact, it is usually best just not to get involved in this manner, as it is often so easy to make commitments in the fervor and compassion of the moment, then may prove very difficult or sacrificial for you to follow through with after returning to the fiscal realities of your day-to-day life back home. Then a promise unkept can become a painful thing for both parties; plus it does not reflect well upon our mission. In order to discourage "double-dipping" efforts by some of the kids we support in school, we insist that any and all monetary gifts be channeled through our secretary-treasurer at our Hartford, Ky headquarters. If they are properly earmarked we will see that it reaches the person it was intended for, although this could clearly create an onerous burden for our secretary if everyone did it. Other helpful expressions are: "M-pa konnen le-m retounin." (don't know when I'll return), or, "M-pa ka fe pwomis." (I can't promise you...). You will hear endless sad stories....most of which are very true, and your first impulse will be to give away everything you have. Resist it. Again, that's not what you come for. You are here to minister to their medical, physical and spiritual needs, but only within the framework of our projects that you support with your presence. This may sound tough, but experience has shown this approach can save a lot of confusion and heartbreak. We also strongly advise against handing out your phone number. Simply tell the requester that you can be contacted through our mission. Never tell someone you will help them to get a travel visa. Respond to such requests by telling them you are unable to do so....and you won't be fibbing, as it is practically impossible for a single unemployed Haitian national to obtain a visa for education in the US or any other reason at this writing. Besides, the legal ramifications and red tape required are far beyond the capacities of most churches or individuals, and should you ultimately succeed, the end result is often not what you'd hoped for. Many who finally get to America will disappear into the diaspora of Haitian ghettos scattered up and down the east Coast and become illegal aliens.

#### OTHER PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to make your visit, you must first obtain a valid, unexpired passport. These are good for ten years. An application can be found at your local post office and the cost will be \$65.00US. This should be applied for at least six weeks prior to your departure. Never travel in Haiti without either your passport or some other photo ID such a driver's license with you at all times. Haitian police can range from very courteous and helpful to quite ugly in demeanor. Remember, YOU are the foreigner. Next in your order of priorities should be sending copies of your professional diplomas or licenses to us at least

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six weeks in advance. Depending on the circumstances we will either forward them to the Haitian Ministry of health or take them in with us. In short, you simply cannot do medical work in Haiti without proof of licensure or training.

Working in our rather isolated area in the northwest of Haiti often involves hiking, travelling in open vehicles or motorbikes and other day-to-day activities and living conditions of a somewhat Spartan nature. It would behoove you to be in the best possible physical condition, but be assured that something can be found for you to be of help with regardless of age or other physical limitations, so long as they do not tie up other group members inordinately in assisting you. We've had group members as young as six and as old as in their eighties. Be sure to take along any medications you require on a regular basis. Do not assume they will be available in our pharmacy. Have your immunizations up to date before departure including tetanus (or DPT), flu vaccine, and (if you are a health worker) hepatitis A and B. An alternative to hepatitis A and B would be an injection of immune serum globulin just prior to departure. Malaria is endemic and very common in our area, so prophylaxis should begin with 500 mg of chloroquin taken once weekly beginning a week before leaving for Haiti. This should continue for the time you are in Haiti and for at least four weeks following your return home. (Try to obtain the generic chloroquin from your pharmacist as the leading American brand, Aralen, is extremely expensive). Even with this precaution, you should sleep under a mosquito net when possible, and use mosquito repellents liberally when outside at night. There are other diseases such as dengue fever that are mosquito-borne as well. The HIV/AIDS threat is very real, with an incidence of around 5% in our area. One must therefore exercise extreme caution in handling of sharps and needles, gloving up when exposed to blood or other body secretions or effluences; and double-gloving during surgery or other invasive procedures such as phlebotomy.

Certain precautions should be adhered to regarding your diet while in Haiti. While properly-prepared Creole cuisine is delicious, the unacclimated digestive system of many visitors to Haiti can be overwhelmed by the amount of garlic, peppers, and other spices in some of the dishes you will be offered. In any event, you should avoid Haitian-prepared food that is not hot and freshly prepared, unless it is fresh fruit that has been soaked or cleansed in bleach or iodine solution. Never drink water in a Haitian restaurant or home that has not first been treated with an appropriate disinfectant, as it will almost certainly contain the E. coli organism that can cause you to develop "traveler's diarrhea", other wise known as the "Haitian High-step." Or worse, you could contract a serious Giardia infection or even typhoid. While on site at our compound at Jolivert, there will always be coolers of freshly treated water available. Be sure to drink plenty of water each day, as the tropical climate can cause dehydration to sneak up on you. The first few days after arrival you may find the heat extremely discomfiting or even exhausting. Stay in the shade, wear loose, airy clothing and don't push yourself too hard until you've become acclimatized. A refreshing "cool-down" in the river can be most refreshing, but carefully avoid getting water in your mouth. Keep plenty of large handkerchiefs or small towels on hand to absorb perspiration. Some kind of head gear, like a sunbonnet, or visored cap on hikes, or when exposed to the sun for longer than a few minutes is highly advised. Be prepared to apply sunscreens copiously to avoid serious sunburn. Mosquitos are much worse in some areas than others, so keep repellent handy as well. Don't pack too many changes of clothing, as laundry can be done by our

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cleaning ladies. It's a good idea, though, to mark the linings of your clothing or undergarments with a marking pencil to avoid confusion, as everyone's clothing is usually washed together. These ladies, while on the payroll, certainly appreciate a tip when large numbers of missionaries are piling dirty clothes on them. Avoid bringing expensive clothing, as it will often be washed with strong lye soap and scrubbed on the rocks!

If you plan on hiking for any distance, or going on a field trip, carry a day pack large enough to contain at least a quart of treated water, plus some of the following items you may need or find of use:

Comfortable hiking shoes with change of socks (expect to ford some rivers).

Small denomination Haitian gourds (one of our staff will be able to change some money for you, but you should not need more than \$10 or \$20 US).

Toilet paper

Flashlight

Towel

Change of clothes

Small fold-up plastic rain hood or pancho

Light snack items

Bible

Note pad and pen or pencil

Creole dictionary

Any medications you may require

Note\* Never pack money in any of your carry-ons or check-through luggage when traveling. Carry it on your person, preferably in a money belt close to your body.

Turning to the medical needs you can help us with, here is a list of some items that it would most helpful for you to carry in with you, as the clinic is constantly running out of these. You can ask your physician or any drug reps you might know to share any samples they can provide. Following, then, is a "needs list" compiled as of year's end, 2008:

NEEDS LIST FOR CLINIQUE JOLIVERT - November, '08

Pharmacy: (the first seven listed are the most crucial just now).

Dilantin 100 mg. ....	1000 caps
Digoxin 0.25 mg.....	1000 tabs
Hytrin or Avodart.....	any amount

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Ophthalmic antibiotic drops, such as ciprofloxin.....any amount  
 Anti-migraine agents (Imitrex, Topomax, etc).....any amount  
 Antifungal topicals (Lamasil, clotrimazole, etc.).....any amount  
 Griseofulvin 250 mg -500 mg.....1000 tabs  
 Antibiotics, any.....any amount  
 Antibiotics, parental (e.g. Rocephin, Cefzil, Levaquin) any amt  
 NSAID's any type.....any amount  
 Benzodiazepines, any type.....any amount  
 H-2 blockers or proton pump agents, any.....any amount  
 Anti-hypertensives, especially ACE inhibitors or beta blockers,  
 .....any amount  
 Morphine sulphate, for injection, 10 mg/ml.....30 ml.  
 Ketamine for injection, 10 mg per ml.....30 ml  
 Propofol (Diprivan) injectable.....any multiple dose vial  
 Lidocaine Injectable, 1 %, (both with and without epi)..any amount  
 Silvadene burn cream, any sized jars.....any amount  
 Vaseline or K-Y jelly.....any number of tubes

Clinic:

ET Tubes, from 6.5 to 11 mm .....3-4 of each  
 “ “ stylettes .....3  
 Cervical dilator set (for D&C's).....1 set  
 Cervical forceps.....1  
 Ace bandages, all sizes.....any amount  
 Telfa or Adaptic dsgs.....any amount  
 Gauze 2x2's, 4x4's, 100's.....any amount  
 Antiseptic pads (alcohol or betadine).....any amount  
 Exam gloves (nonsterile).....1000  
 Surgical gloves (sterile, 7 ½, 8).....any amount  
 Syringes, 2 1/2ml with needles (21, 22, 23 g).....any amount  
 Syringes, 20 or 30 ml.....100  
 Any disposable procedure packs or trays, sterile or unsterile  
 (tracheotomy, thoracentesis, paracentesis, laceration, OB precip, central line, etc.)  
 Hydrogen peroxide, plastic pint bottles  
 Band-aids, any size.....any amount  
 Tongue blades, 1000's.....any amount  
 Packing gauze, iodoform, bottles.....6 bottles  
 Adhesive tape, paper or nylon, mostly 1" wide, large tubes, 6 tubes

We have many, if not most, of these items in stock at Clinique Jolivert at any given time, but we run short of all these from time to time, so please bring as many of them as possible with you. At this point, however, I must ask you NOT to declare them in your customs form, as they may well be confiscated by customs officials at the airport. It is also wise to include at least one army duffel bag in your luggage selection, then pack any medicines or medical supplies near the bottom of the duffel, covered well with some articles of clothing, both on the outsides and on top of the supplies. Should you be one of the rare persons whose baggage is searched diligently, resulting in the discovery of these items, and are challenged about them, simply tell them: "Oh! But these are not for personal use or sale, but are donated for the poor in the area where we work." That will often satisfy them. If the official cannot speak English, ask one of your interpreters to explain to him in those words.

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Ask for these items early on, so you can stage a “pill-pushing” party with some volunteers to help punch out all samples , enclose them in a ziplock bag labeled with drug name, dosage, and date of expiration. Be certain the date of expiration has not passed prior to your visit. Do not waste baggage space with unnecessary paper boxes and packing materials that sample meds are packaged in.

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The following pages are devoted to diagnostic and treatment algorithms for the most frequently encountered tropical diseases you will be confronting while in Haiti, along with some personal observations of our own. For more in-depth discussion, refer to GEOGRAPHIC MEDICINE FOR THE PRACTITIONER, BY Warren & Mahmoud, from which these algorithms were borrowed.

A word first on the subject of HIV and AIDS in Haiti: Called SIDA there (after the French: “Syndrome Immunologique Deficiencie Acquis”)it was first recognized in Haiti in 1978-79 about the time it was first reported in the US by a team at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami. It is largely believed by the medical community today that the virus mutated somehow to its present form somewhere in Africa, was carried to Europe and the US, then ultimately reached Haiti by tourists. Historically, during those years there were a large number of homosexual French expatriates frequenting Port-au-Prince who were thought to have spread the disease to a considerable number of young bisexual (by monetary necessity) Haitian male prostitutes. Over the years, these prostitutes passed the virus on heterosexually until as high as 15% of the sexually-active adults in and around Port-au-Prince became infected with the HIV, with rates among prostitutes of either sex approaching 80%. After the initiation of widespread education, treatment and other public health measures such as the distribution of condoms, It is now thought the incidence of infection in Port-au-Prince and other large Haitian cities in more like 10% or less, while in rural areas it is around 4-5%. The second highest prevalence of AIDS is in spouses of AIDS victims. (about 55%, but this has been mitigated somewhat by the early treatment of HIV-positive persons by multiple-drug cocktails made available in the past few years). Much of the AIDS we now see is in infants who were infected trans-placentally, or in the birth canals of their infected mothers. Clearly, any child seen with “failure-to-thrive” syndrome, recurrent fever, unexplained weight loss, or persistent diarrhea should be suspect of HIV infection. One almost universally found physical sign in the HIV-positive infant is widespread enlargement of lymph nodes in the groin, under the arms and in the region of the neck (inguinal, axillary, cervical). All such infants should be tested as well as their parents. Fortunately, due to partnerships with such organizations as WHO and UNICEF, HIV testing materials are being provided by the Haitian Ministry of Health. Our lab, of course, is equipped to do such testing and does so on a regular basis. Tuberculosis, in Haiti as in America, is the most frequently-encountered opportunistic disease seen. Anyone suspected of having pulmonary TBC should be concurrently tested for HIV.

The physical presentation of the AIDS sufferer is characteristic enough to have coined the term, “malady mort” (illness of death) among Haitians. Hallmarks of the disease are chronic wasting, persistent diarrhea, chronic cough, oral moniliasis, Kaposi’s Sarcoma, and lymphadenopathy. (Enlarged lymph nodes, usually of the groin, armpits or neck).

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We as medical personnel must always follow the strictest double-gloving and betadine-rinsing techniques when handling body fluids, doing surgery, starting IV's, venipuncture, or dressing wounds during our work at the clinic, since the risk for contracting the HIV virus is not negligible. Great care must be taken in the disposal of all sharps and contaminated materials.

#### A NOTE ON CULTURE SHOCK

It would be remiss on our part not to share with you some things experienced in the way of the sights, sounds, smells, and simply the downright "strangeness" of Haiti to the first-time visitor from America. Even for those who have traveled widely, you may not be quite prepared for many of your encounters. You are in for some eye-opening, nose-holding, stomach-disturbing events. The profound degree of poverty, filth, and abject human degradation and despair you may witness in some areas can throw you into a state of shock that could cripple you from effective work and witness while in Haiti...and even for months after returning home. One thing you can count on: you will never be the same after your visit. You may have witnessed naked and starving children searching for food in heaps of garbage refuse or drinking filthy water out of ditches running with raw sewage, where their mothers must squat in the mud, heat, dust, or insects all day vending their meager wares. Spoiling, fly-blown meat is sold along the dusty walkways and its stench along with the rotting fish that has lain in the sun too long can be overwhelming. Animals of every size and type roam openly among the streets and roads. The cacophony of their braying, bleating, and crowing only add to the already alien mélange of sound that strikes your ears from the hawkers, the quarreling women, and the auto horns. Beggars and hustlers are everywhere in the cities...and you will never forget the haunting, hungry eyes that follow you constantly, as the poor hold out their hands to you while rubbing their bellies as you pass them by. In short, you are face to face with abject poverty in its starkest, ugliest form on our planet, and you must be spiritually lifted up enough to not allow it to deflect or deter you from what you have come to accomplish: which, quite simply stated, is, in whatever way you are prepared by dint of training or inclination, to share the good news of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world.

All this being said, you will find happily that Haitians are basically a proud, modest, vivacious, and courageous people who are extremely resilient, hard-working, loving, and family-oriented folks. Unfortunately, all too few of them truly know Jesus Christ. Even the majority who purport to be Catholic still live in the ruthless grip of witch doctors ("bokors") who hold them hostage to a number of cruel gods and goddesses in the vodou pantheon from whom they must be constantly buying favors (through the interventions of the bokor, of course). Remember, while you cannot change their world in the brief time of your visit, you CAN light a single candle rather than just curse the darkness. For you are one of the "children of light" that God has commissioned to carry His light into every dark corner of the globe. The best antidote for culture shock is to keep your eyes on the Cross, remember what motivated you to come, and what a beautiful hope you have to offer through the mercy and grace of Christ Jesus to the lost, sick, and dying of this sad land called Haiti.

Please try to arrange at least one meeting with one of your group leaders before leaving for Haiti in order to answer all your questions and to discuss more fully your upcoming trip...and, more importantly to pray about the trip and to get better acquainted with each other. Ask lots of questions! None will be considered too naïve or silly for consideration. And when you finally arrive, remember simply: all that you say and do should reflect what our Lord Himself said: "I come to serve, not to be served." We pray your visit will be productive, rewarding, and spiritually uplifting. This we promise you: you will never forget the experience. It may, in fact, bring deep spiritual change to your life....it certainly did ours!

Godspeed and God bless! "Dokte Bob" and "Miz Betty"

Robert T. Johnson, MD, President,

Betty Johnson, RN, Chief OPERATIONS OFFICER

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