

DGHI has partnered with Clinica Esperanza in Roátan, Honduras for several years, collaborating with a team of SRT students led by Dr. Dennis Clements. In our work this year, we asked what would be of most help and worked to identify how we could best support the clinic's efforts on the ground in advancing the health of their patient population. As the founder of Clinica Esperanza, nurse Peggy Stranges informed us that the clinic could really benefit from a study looking at the dental health of young children on the island, as the clinic was witnessing high rates of molar extractions in school-aged children.

Dental health is often overlooked on the global health research agenda. However, it is an important focus in a person's overall health and wellbeing. Poor dental hygiene can have tremendous impacts on quality of life leading to chronic pain, missed days of school, and later, more pressing oral problems, which is why the clinic had expressed an interest in investigating this growing problem in their patient population.

As chance would have it, our mentor's wife is Dr. Martha Ann Keels, a renowned pediatric dentist here in Durham, North Carolina. She was already involved with an NIH-funded study that looked to establish the validity of a risk assessment for dental caries (cavities) in children aged 6-10 in the United States. We were able to meet virtually with Dr. Keels, and the existing NIH questionnaire was translated and adapted to fit the local context of the clinic by Dr. Sheranie Dilbert, a recent graduate from dental school in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and the head dentist at Clinica Esperanza who is fluent in both Spanish and English.

Dr. Dilbert and her dental team will be administering the adapted dental surveys and capturing x-rays from willing participants. While our team will not be directly analyzing the x-ray component of the study, we believe that it will allow for a more comprehensive assessment on the survey's ability to capture the reality of the dental health of the patient population. Our arm of the study would aim to establish the validity of this risk assessment outside the US and seeks to expand the findings from the NIH-funded study.

Lastly, the second part of the Honduras SRT team is continuing last year's project of analyzing pre- and post-natal data among the women who visit the clinic. In the past, the clinic has been able to use the work of previous SRT groups to gain funding and certification within the community of Roátan and the country of Honduras. We see the potential for further expansion of services based on the continued success of this arm of our summer project.

Our group is excited to begin this research into the niche topic of dental health in Honduras, a country that does not always receive as much attention in the research world. Just like everyone else in this pandemic, we have faced some challenges in working remotely with an international partner, but we remain very motivated to forge ahead and address any difficulties as they arise,

SRT Honduras Blog 1 – Summer 2021

so that we can produce the best version of our work possible and grow from such an incredible experience.