



All Things Ignatian



ILAC Dental

Creighton Dental Students and Faculty provide dental care in the Dominican Republic



The Institute for Latin American Concern began in the early 1970s as an immersion experience for Jesuits. By the late 1970s, Ernesto Travieso SJ, Narciso Sanchez SJ and Raymond Shaddy DDS began sending health care teams to rural campos in the Dominican Republic. During these summer programs, teams would consist of Medical, Dental, Nursing and Pharmacy students and professionals. This program had a dental component from the earliest days, typically consisting of a dental professional and a dental student at each campo. At that time, the only service provided was dental extractions, with teams taking only surgical instruments and anesthetic.

Since that time, the ILAC program has expanded to provide health care and education for many areas in the Dominican Republic throughout the year, but the summer program in the rural campos has continued. During this time, the dental needs of the patients in these campos have changed. While extractions continue to be one of the leading services provided, many patients now need only fillings or cleanings. To meet this need, the ILAC summer dental program began to acquire portable dental equipment in the early 2000s, and this evolution continues.



Student James Kelly, Bucara de Caballeros

At the present time, the summer ILAC program continues to send teams to six rural campos. These teams each include two dental students, and a volunteer professional, often a faculty member. We now have portable generators, compressors, dental chairs and other equipment which allows teams to provide fillings, sealants, cleanings and other normal dental services. This amount of equipment and supplies has greatly increased the logistic challenges of providing these services, but the Creighton Dental School and other companies have generously provided much of the necessary support. During the summer of 2010, approximately 1100 patients were provided dental services.



Students Jeff Allen and Elaine McNeight, El Caf 



Challenges

The ILAC dental program continues to add equipment in order to provide more comprehensive dental care. As well as dental students, the program is considering the addition of dental hygiene students to the teams. Funding and professional recruitment continue to be challenging, but overall the program has succeeded in providing a much-needed service, as well as offering a life changing experience to students and professionals.