

Ethiopian Report

June 5-15, 2008

I travelled to Ethiopia in early June for the purpose of meeting prospective partners for a student cultural immersion experience. The weather was cool and pleasant and accommodations were comfortable and very affordable. I stayed at a guesthouse across the street from Addis Ababa University. The graduate nursing school of AA University was adjacent to the government's Black Lion Hospital, a large teaching hospital. I met physicians and faculty who are on staff at both institutions.

I was a guest of the Kale Heywet Church, a large association of churches across most of Ethiopia. The church has many international partners, including the World Health Organization, Family International, PEPFAR, and is able to support HIV/AIDS clinics at 6 sites throughout the country. I visited 4 sites, one in Addis Ababa where the guest house is located, one in Nazaret, about a 2 hour drive west of the city, and two in the south, Awassa and Shashamene. Shashamene is also the site of a government run school of nursing.

At the HIV/AIDS sites I was introduced to the Directors and given a tour of the facilities. The directors provided a formal PowerPoint presentation of their work with HIV/AIDS groups. They provide highly skilled screening and confirmatory testing for HIV/AIDS in a confidential setting. Nurse counselors work with clients to help them understand their disease. In some cases, they include role-play to assist partners who need to inform a partner of their diagnosis. Nurses are very skilled in the use of psychosocial interventions. Home visiting programs were very large at one time but because of the availability of retroviral therapy, those programs are decreasing. In their place, the centers have begun social programs to help clients generate income now that they are no longer homebound. Peer programs for educating communities about the disease have been very effective. The Church even won WHO recognition for their coffee ceremony adapted to promote community awareness of the disease.

My host was Ato Kukura, deputy director of the Kale Heywet Church. He arranged for my visits and connected me with the physician/researcher in charge of all the HIV/AIDS clinics. Dr. Degu was very busy with his work and serves as the only expert consultant on AIDS in the country. However, he was also very gracious and open to a partnership.

There are many governmental and non-governmental organizations in the country as well as private clinics. They have a two tier system, free and fee based. Resources vary by geographical site. Nursing schools lack standardization and licensure for practice is not mandatory. I spoke with the Dean of Nursing at AA University and a medical school professor/attending physician who were very hopeful that this would change soon. There are few graduate schools for nurses and no doctoral programs. Partnerships with a Scandinavian country is being considered now to begin doctoral education.

I hope to return in May, 2009 with students who desire to learn about international health care. I hope to arrange some classes with the school of nursing in Addis Ababa and Shashamene and to visit the HIV/AIDS clinics. I also plan to take nursing educational resources.