

Adjusting Perspective: Chiropractor Joins Flying Doctors of America in Jamaica

Dr. Rachel Brissey, DC, BSN, was in high demand during a recent medical mission trip to Jamaica, a country that does not recognize chiropractic as a legal profession. For Dr. Brissey, it was a rewarding experience that affected her outlook professionally and personally.

"I had no expectations going into it, since it was my first mission trip," related Dr. Brissey, "although I was curious how I would be able to adapt as a chiropractor to my surroundings and provide my services with the facilities at hand."

When she got back home, she had a new appreciation for the life she has in America and the medical facilities and modern equipment available to American chiropractors.

Dr. Brissey was the only chiropractor among the 13-member team that traveled to Jamaica April 29 - May 6 on a mission organized by the Flying Doctors of America, a nonprofit, nonsectarian organization that provides free medical care to needy people around the world. The trip to Jamaica included a day at the SOS-Kinderdorf Children's Village, an orphanage in Montego Bay; two days at Falmouth Hospital and Healthcare Center in Trelawny; and two days at a health care facility in Alexandria in St. Ann's Bay.

Five doctors, a pharmacist, two massage therapists, three support staff and two team leaders comprised the group.

Of the many perspectives Dr. Brissey brought home was, she had a new appreciation for doctors working together.

"There were none of the professional issues among the doctors that you find in day-to-day practice, and there was no hesitation by any of the medical doctors to refer patients to me," Dr. Brissey noted, citing the teamwork atmosphere among the doctors.

For more than a decade, Flying doctors of America has been bringing together physicians, dentists, nurses, chiropractors, other health professionals and nonmedical support volunteers to care for people who otherwise would never receive professional health care. The team members donate their time and talent, and fund the trip.

Flying Doctors of America focuses on the poor who live in conditions that are difficult for most Americans to imagine. Knowing that someone cares renews hope for these people who live in an otherwise hopeless situation.

"I came home with the realization of how wealthy our nation is, an awareness of the things we take for granted, such as jobs, and the many amenities we have," Dr. Brissey observed. She also saw firsthand the conditions of the health care facilities in Jamaica.

"I did most of my adjustments on beds," Dr. Brissey explained. "I worked on a regular bed in the orphanage, and in the public health clinics, I did adjusting on old hospital beds. There was no

modern equipment to put patients on to get them in different positions."

The available equipment, or lack of it, was the most difficult part of the trip. "I had to adjust my technique to accommodate for the lack of equipment, and I incorporated the use of an Activator," Dr. Brissey explained. "A very worthwhile donation to the Flying Doctors would be a mobile adjusting table that could be used by chiropractors and the massage therapists who travel on these missions."

Dr. Brissey noted some advantages of the simple lifestyle of the Jamaicans. "In some ways, money has nothing to do with it - I saw patients in their 70s and 80s, particularly back in the hills in Alexandria, who were not near as debilitated as many elderly Americans I see. The elderly were generally in extremely good health. I attribute this to their home-grown foods, and their less stressful lifestyle."

Despite general good health, the patients were amazed at the hands-on healing of Dr. Brissey. "They were so thankful for chiropractic," she observed.

It was in the early 1980s that Dr. Brissey, then a nurse practitioner at Grady Hospital in Atlanta, had her calling to become a chiropractor. This career choice of the natural healing of the spine fit in well with the ideology of her denomination, which believes in hands-on healing.

She graduated from Life College in Marietta, Georgia in 1985 and practiced in Roswell, Macon and Perry, Georgia. Dr. Brissey opened her own clinic on St. Simons Island, Georgia, in 1992. Dr. Brissey heard about the mission through one of her patients, Lisa Crosby, a secretary for MAPS International, who thought Dr. Brissey would be interested in Flying Doctors' need of a chiropractor for the Jamaica mission.

Would she go again? "Oh yes, definitely," Dr. Brissey enthused. "It was well worth the trip for me for what I learned, the new perspectives I have, and being able to give of myself. I wouldn't trade this experience for anything."

Flying Doctors of America

With Flying Doctors of America, everybody wins. The medical and nonmedical volunteers miss only a few days of work and go on the adventure of a lifetime. Support volunteers serve as translators, team leaders, photographers and healthcare assistants. The individual or corporate sponsors get tax benefits plus the knowledge that they are making a real difference in the world. And most of all, those in need receive first-rate health care.

Flying Doctors of America was founded by Allan Gathercoal in 1990 with \$700, a wing and a prayer. In the past 10 years the organization has flown more than 100 missions and provided free care to more than 85,000 children and adults. Among the areas served are Mexico, South and Central America, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, India, Africa, Mongolia and Thailand.

Known as an effective innovator and entrepreneur, Mr. Gathercoal has pioneered churches, businesses and educational programs in California. He is the president and founder of Medical Mercy Missions, Inc. (dba Flying Doctors of America). Mr. Gathercoal has earned graduate degrees in psychology and theology, and is an ordained minister and a pilot. He has taught leadership development at Emory University in Atlanta, and, in 1996, he received the "Vision of Race Unity" award.

These credentials are impressive, but the most outstanding attribute Mr. Gathercoal possesses is his passion to help those in desperate need, which Flying Doctors of America has done for more

than 10 years now. It's work that has been fulfilling and challenging. And yet something vital has been missing: building long-term relationships with the people served. Those who had flown to other countries to treat needy men, women and children for a few days have deeply desired a way to forge a meaningful, long-lasting connection with those they serve.

The answer to that need is now being established with an ongoing work in the Inca region of Peru: Pueblo de Los Ninos - "The Children's Village." Officials estimate more than 2,000 children ages 4 to 14 live on the streets in the Inca region in Peru, and the government is ill equipped to care for them. But now, in this remote but beautiful corner of the world, hope is dawning.

Through the support of compassionate people, Flying Doctors of America is building Pueblo de Los Ninos, a unique orphanage nestled in a valley of the Andes that will touch the lives of children in desperate need.

The local Peruvian government has donated the 12.5 acres of picture-postcard land near a village, which overlooks soaring mountains and streams, for the site. Initial construction has already begun on key buildings.

As an ongoing outreach, Pueblo de Los Ninos will become a beautiful, intimate community of adobe homes and buildings, along with 10 acres of agricultural land. Twelve individual homes will be built for 120 children, initially for the 4-5 year olds. A "mother" and a tia ("aunt") will care for the children around-the-clock in each home.

A school will be built to work in cooperation with the village school, sharing facilities and skills. An administration building and medical clinic will enable diligent oversight and comprehensive care to the children. A dining hall/auditorium will provide the main midday meal each day plus opportunities for music, drama and other arts. And a church will provide for the spiritual heart of the endeavor.

To achieve these goals, the organization is seeking: lifetime patrons - to underwrite the construction of the 20 homes, which will each cost \$20,000 and house 10 children; corporate and individual patrons - to build the various buildings; and 240 patrons - to underwrite the work of the orphanage, which requires a minimum of a three-year commitment at \$1,200 a year and includes visits to the orphanage one or two weeks every three years.

You may contact Flying Doctors of America at 4015 Holcomb Bridge road, Suite 350, Norcross, Georgia 30092; telephone (770) 209-9277; fax (770) 446-9634; or at <http://www.fdoamerica.com>.

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