

Dr. David Berdy's State of the Health Report

For the Children of Vinh Son, Vietnam

October 16, 2007

We are extremely grateful and blessed by Dr. Berdy's visit to the Vinh Son Orphanages. His dedication to serving the poor in Vietnam this past August provided treatment, assessment, and analysis so that VSO will be able to better serve the children's health needs in the future. He did this at great personal cost and sacrifice, and we are humbled by his dedication to the service of others.

Dr. Berdy's visit to VSO focused on 4 categories and one specific recommendation for an individual child. The following is a discussion of the major opportunities and list of possible actions we intend to take based upon Dr. Berdy's report:

- Overcrowding
- Dietary Deficiencies
- Parasitic Infections
- Dental Health
- VS 1 Teen Needing an Ultra-Sound for his Gall Bladder: Recommendation

Overcrowding

For a variety of reasons, VSO has stayed away from issues involving the oversight of the orphanages. This decision was made after reviewing the complexities and responsibilities this would present. Considerations include rules of the local government, Church guidelines, parents and the Montagnard culture in general, and a lack of continuing presence "on the ground" from our organization. We will continue to offer suggestions, but should not participate in direct oversight of the orphanages. VSO simply does not have the authority to do so. However, following Dr. Berdy's suggestions, we will address the following:

- **Regrouping so the older watch after the younger** – This is done somewhat on an informal basis now from what we have observed. This is especially evident at meal times. We will bring this to the attention of the caregivers, but the overcrowding issue will be the toughest to address as outlined above.

- **Adoption** is something we are very interested in as a referral organization. Not long ago, we tried to establish a link with an adoption agency for the children at Vinh Son, but in the end it just didn't happen. We would like to work with a good, reputable agency, as we feel the complexities of adoption of the minority children from the central highlands in Vietnam, is beyond our capabilities and not part of our charter. However, if we can assist in an indirect manner, we will.

Nutrition and Dietary Deficiencies

We will address this issue with Dr. Berdy's guidance, especially concerning fortified formula for the infants and milk with every meal. We have provided powdered milk in the past and will continue to do so.

- We will work with the Sisters, where there are infants, to provide fortified formula. We will discuss this with them and determine the cost.
- We are also interested in providing milk at every meal, but as above, we need to discuss with the Sisters.
- We will learn more from Dr. Berdy about iron supplements and testing supplies – their cost and availability. A cost benefit analysis will help us determine what is the appropriate course of action
- Diet may be the most difficult as it is partially linked to culture. An education program may be required to communicate its importance and benefits.

Dr. Berdy's additional comments on this were:

..... fortified formula is vital for all infants and is likely available in the larger cities. Milk should be the beverage of choice for most all children. Iron rich protein sources mentioned earlier will help reduce the prevalence of anemia and thereby improve general health. It is particularly important to include a protein in the breakfast meal; eggs would be an excellent choice (hard boiled preferred). Iron supplements may be necessary for some children; those individuals could be determined through simple and low cost finger prick testing of hemoglobin much like glucose meters that diabetics use.

Parasitic Infections

With Dr. Berdy's help and guidance, we will work jointly to address this condition on an annual basis. Dr. Berdy recommends that Mebendazole tablets be provided to each school age child. The appropriate time for administration is just after the school year begins. In addition, any child, who travels outside the orphanage during the year to his home village, should be retreated upon return. Again, educating the staff and children on the importance of hand-washing and safe water sources is paramount. As always, VSO will conduct this effort in conjunction with the Sisters to maximize our efforts and avoid duplication.

Dental Health

Dr. Berdy suggests tooth brushing areas in the bath facilities, with filtered and treated water. He states:

"Dental hygiene: After discussion with several professionals and understanding the facilities available, the best option is placement of filtered water stations in each bath area like office water coolers, additives are not believed to promote any further benefit than toothpaste and some in fact may harm the enamel over time. Education will be key to insure proper care of teeth. Of course if we can arrange a means to clean teeth by visiting team, we could accomplish both goals at the same time. Certainly toothbrushes should be changed twice per year and toothpaste readily provided."

On VSO's next visit to the orphanages, we will look at establishing areas tailored to and promotion of proper dental care. These areas should have filtered water, hand washing facilities and hopefully extra toothbrushes and toothpaste. It would be helpful if there was a caregiver at each location who would be responsible for dental care and education. In that way, we could ensure proper dental hygiene practices and establish new habits among the children.

The East-Meets-West dental team (a non-profit that serves in VN) has agreed to do an outreach program at Vinh Son in 2008. They usually have about 5 dentists on site, and will examine all the children, cleaning and providing sealant for their teeth. Repair work, such as extractions or cavities, will also be provided.

VS 1 Teen May Need an Ultra Sound for His Gall Bladder

We have addressed this need and funds have been sent for this young man to visit a hospital in Saigon for the appropriate assessment.

(See Dr. David M. Berdy's in the next document)