**2012 ACHI Medical Outreach in Nigeria**

African Community Health Initiative (ACHI) is a nonprofit, non-political organization that seeks to improve health care delivery to the rural areas of Sub-Sahara Africa. ACHI is based in USA and conducts a medical outreach in Nigeria annually.

              ACHI’s goal is to improve the health of rural dwellers through health screening, education on chronic and endemic disease management, and year round maintenance program for patients with diabetes and hypertension. Our program covers all ages, including deworming of school age children and vitamin therapy.

Since ACHI began conducting medical outreach’s in 2006, they have been able to:

      -Increase the number of villages they reach every year.

      -Introduce a mobile laboratory.

      -Build a team of medical staff that can screen about 400 people in a day.

      -Introduce a maintenance program for year round treatment of those diagnosed with diabetes and hypertension.

             This year with the support of organizations like Hope for the City who donated wheel chairs, walkers, clutches, canes etc. ACHI was able to put smiles on the faces of those who benefited from them. We gave wheelchair to a man that attends our program every year, but due to arthritis he was unable to come this year on his own and we sent someone with a wheelchair to go and bring him to the venue. He was happy to see us and the wheelchair was left with him to assist him in moving around. Also a woman who had stroke 15 years ago and is dependent on her husband and children for all her activities of daily living, was given a walker which made a huge difference in her dependency. She was able to ambulate with the walker without support. Many were given four point canes for better support in place of sticks they were using.

Thanks to Lions club Eyeglasses program for making it possible for many in the villages to enjoy reading their bibles and other materials again. We also received donations of children’s vitamins from Americare, and toothpaste and brushes from Patterson Dental this year.

              The ACHI medical team went to seven communities this year. Due to the need, the co-sponsors of three communities requested that ACHI conduct outreach in their community for two days. A total of about 3461 patients were screened. Below is this year’s results.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Communities  | Diabetes | Hypertension | Malaria | Other Diseases | Children | Total |
| Ajatakiri | 10 | 47 | 47 | 22 | 45 | 171 |
| Avutu | 41 | 212 | 78 | 98 | 112 | 541 |
| Umugolo | 65 | 212 | 116 | 158 | 43 | 594 |
| Ogwa | 22 | 90 | 55 | 50 | 111 | 328 |
| Nkwerre | 35 | 122 | 62 | 44 | 105 | 368 |
| Amakohia | 45 | 224 | 146 | 294 | 300 | 1009 |
| Uboma | 13 | 88 | 127 | 116 | 106 | 450 |
| Grand Total | 231 | 995 | 631 | 782 | 822 | 3461 |

           All the patients received screening for diabetes and hypertension, health education, medical consultation, with basic laboratory investigations supported by ACHI Lab-in a- suite case, and primary eye care by optometrists. About 800 patients received eye glasses this year.

The use of the card system has helped in keeping records of the number of people attending the program, and the effectiveness of the program. We saw drop in blood glucose levels and blood pressures by looking and the records. Looking at the data from 2010 to this year’s record, it showed an increase in the number of people screened each year. The increase in funding resulted in an increase in the number of people screened each day from 200 to 400. We saw 2,843 people in 2010, 2,651 people in 2011 and this year 3,461 people. The news of our maintenance program and its effect on the population served has reached so many people and the result is the increase in the number of people wanting to be included in the program. There were two outstanding cases we could not turn our backs on but to help find a solution to their problem. There was a widow with five children whose husband died two years ago, she brought three of her children to the center at Mbano (Umugolo village) in Imo State. During assessment, we discovered that her 15 and 12 year old daughters have type (1) diabetes with 450 and 290 blood sugars, and she confirmed that she is aware of the diagnosis. Due to poverty and ignorance, she resorted to treating them with “BITTER LEAF and UTAZI” ( native vegetables that are very bitter). ACHI decided to keep them for three days, teaching about diabetes, diet, insulin therapy and blood glucose monitoring. Their blood glucose is currently averaging at 120 and 170 respectively. The second case is a man from Umuihi in Ihitte/Uboma local government of Imo State whose average blood glucose was 500, he was also started on insulin, supplied with testing equipment, Insulin syringe and both long acting and short acting insulin. He is also doing well and feeling better. These families will continue to need our support in sustaining their treatment and enjoy a better life. There are more people out there looking for help and support in managing their diabetes. We have limited resources for so many people.

               Renovation of the Resource Centre commenced immediately after the outreach, thanks to Friends of Nigeria (FON) organization for their kind donations towards the project. The resource center is located in Amakohia. It will be used as a community center for scheduling of health education classes, collection of diabetic and dressing supplies for those identified during the outreach. During the eight years of our medical outreach in these villages, and identification of many individuals with diabetic wounds, and the realization that availability of dressing supplies will help those individuals to take care of their wounds and prevent complications. ACHI decided to have a place that is easily accessible, and centrally located as a resource center. It will serve as a central location for all the communities we serve. All the equipment, including the Lab-in a-suite case, wound care materials, back up blood sugar and blood pressure equipment’s will be stored here. Patients can come to the center for blood work that is not readily available during programs. One of our main goals is to form a support group out of these individuals, so they can help each other along the way. There is power in numbers, and in knowing that you are not alone in this race for cure, and cry of help.

                With the conclusion of the 2012 outreach and analysis of the data from the health records, it is apparent that diabetes and hypertension is very high. High blood pressure is a major health issue in most of the communities. For instance, 49% of the patients screened in Avutu are hypertensive, 38% in Umugolo, 46% in Nkwerre and 32% in Amakohia. If these patients don’t receive treatment they have an increased risk of death and disability from stroke, heart failure, and kidney failure in these communities. ACHI’S maintenance program and health education with emphasis on awareness, prevention, treatment and control will be there to support them.

In conclusion, Ignorance is a disease and knowledge is power. If we can educate these people on the disease process, treatment and prevention, we have given them wisdom to self- care, and understanding what their problems are, and helping them find solution to it. There is pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, joy and fulfillment in GIVING, and in knowing that you are helping others.