

Kimberley Dental Team August 2013 Update

It is now a few weeks since our August trip and we have been reflecting on a year of remarkable achievements and events.

Late in July, Jan and John set off to drive from Perth with the new Toyota workmate and KDT accommodation van. There was a scheduled stop at the Karalundi Aboriginal Community School 60km north of Meekatharra where we screened the children and removed a lower wisdom tooth for the wife of the CEO who was in pain and preparing to travel with her 2 small children the 6 hours to Geraldton. Meanwhile Dr Jilen Patel and his younger brother Shaheel arrived in the Kimberley via Kununurra, where they collected the KDT car from storage and then the clinical van stored at Warmun. Once again the Warmun School hosted KDT and Jilen ran a dental session, treating 13 people. We met up in Halls Creek and celebrated John's birthday with a 'Jan n Jilen' master class quality birthday cake.

On Sunday 4th our first team arrived in Halls Creek from Kununurra. In the first week KDT staffed 3 clinical locations in Halls Creek; with a team at the hospital dental clinic (HCHDC), another with the KDT dental trailer at the IGA clinic and the KAMSC truck at the school managed by our Oral Health Officer, Robyn Long. The KDTT was also utilised very effectively at the communities of Ringer Soak and Yiyili.

In week two there was a continued focus at our 3 Halls Creek locations as well as screening at the Frail Aged and an oral health education session with the staff, a helicopter trip across the Durack range to Gibb River community and a planned trip to the community of Warmun. We had the added excitement of a luncheon and clinic viewing by the Governor His Excellency Malcolm McCusker, Mrs Tonya McCusker and their daughter Mary on the Wednesday. A small team set off with the KDT dental trailer to Warmun however we lost control and rolled the car and trailer just out of Halls Creek. Sadly the vehicles were written off and the occupants suffered serious but 'mendable' injuries. Jilen, Moses and Natalie returned to Perth for specialist care and Jan stayed with the team.

The nine KDT team members not involved in the actual accident were outstanding in their support of the injured people and also of John who had the incredible responsibility of managing the transfers to Perth, medical outcomes, damaged vehicles and the salvage of stock. Over the following days KDT was also embraced by the local community in a heartwarming show of concern and affection.

The accident and loss of our car and clinical trailer naturally changed the nature of the August trip. Instead of a week spent at the Kutjungka a quick reevaluation was required. We decided to spend a further 2 days at the HCHDC and KAMSC truck at the school. On Wednesday the team left for Billiluna. With a little time up our sleeve we detoured off the Tanami Road to visit Wolfe Crater. There was a work team carrying out maintenance and a worker with a toothache. When asked if we could help the answer was 'can do', after all how often do you have an oral surgeon at Wolfe Crater – not sure if Chris realized how 'lucky' he was. Once in Billiluna and without our dental trailer we needed to improvise so set up on the verandah of our accommodation with limited gear but still managed to provide a comprehensive service for 15 people.

Once back in Halls Creek on Friday we were joined by additional team members Alena and Tana for our last week and Trish Pepper who, thanks to her amazing bosses, flew in to Halls Creek to help us with the task of West Kimberley community visits and getting the vehicles across to Broome. Our final weekend in Halls Creek was spent packing our gear including the salvaged contents of our clinical trailer in preparation to set off on Sunday for our last week on the road. We were sad to wave goodbye to Robyn who had been an incredible support to the Jan and John and to the team in general; both clinically and with the children and parents and also with post accident salvage and stock management.

Initially we planned to camp near Bayulu community but in light of our recent trauma and the loss of our dental trailer the wonderful DHS staff, Ian and Claudette Davison, at Fitzroy wouldn't hear of it so we stayed with them and on Monday and Tuesday travelled out to the communities of Bayulu and Muludja. Wednesday saw us wave goodbye to our fabulous hosts and travel to Pandanus Park community for a ½ day session. Once back in Broome there was the final pack down of truck, accommodation trailer and storage with the help of the amazing Trish and Marg and Dennis Gregory who drove the accommodation trailer back to Perth while Jan and John flew home in the helicopter.

August 2013 Team members:

Week 1. Dr Jilen Patel, Dr John Hearne, Dr Olivia Tran (NSW), DA Ruth Warden, DA Sue Matheson, DA Jane Sim, Robyn Long and final year students Lisa Holliday and Unna Chidambaram, Shaheel Patel, John and Jan

Week 2. Dr Jilen Patel, Dr Sue Anderson, Dr Andrew Heap and Helen Heap, Dr Moses Lee, Dr Natalie Leow, DA Libby Becsi, DH Sabrina Weaver, and a second week for the two students Lisa and Unna and Jan, John, Shaheel and Robyn Long.

Week 3. Dr Dennis Gregory, Dr Tim Clair, Dr Naomi Kohan, Dr Yeshani Chandraweera, DA Ranae Russo, Robyn Long, Jan and John.

Week 4. Dr Dennis Gregory, Dr Tim Clair, DA Alena Mills, DA Tana Mawdsley (Qld), Trish Pepper, Jan and John.

In addition to providing oral health education and check ups for 161 children, 378 general dental appointments were undertaken, providing 130 extractions, 233 restorations, 37 scale and cleans, 62 radiographs, 13 fluoride treatments and 375 fissure seals.

At the end of our first week back in early in September John and Jan travelled to Queensland to give a presentation to the Dental Partners Conference on the Kimberley Dental Team. Dental Partners are major sponsors of KDT and hosted a fabulous event at Sanctuary Cove for 260 delegates.

The business of medical attention, insurance claims and replacement of vehicles is a consuming task and we are grateful for the support and expertise of our Rotary steering committee. We have also had incredible support from dental supply companies with special mention of Henry Schein Halas and SDI.

Our new initiative, KDT Southern Program is underway with a visit to the Northam Playgroup last Friday and scheduled visits to UnitingWest Homeless shelter and the Forgotten Australians at Tuart Place before the end of 2014. Thanks to KDT volunteers who are giving their time to this program.

Strong Teeth for Kimberley Kids daily toothbrushing program has received a huge boost with the arrival of 120,000 toothbrushes guaranteeing supplies for the next two years. Not to forget the incredible response to our toothpaste drive with donations from all over the state including schools, groups and Rotary clubs, most especially the Rotary Clubs of Heirison and Perth.

A big thank you to our fabulous volunteers, sponsors and supporters, including the businesses and people of Halls Creek and surrounding communities who, by their generosity and ongoing support, make our task much easier.

The August 2013 trip reinforces our mantra that **'It's not just about teeth'**.

Jan and John Owen

Kimberley Dental Team

www.kimberleydentalteam.com