

ABSTRACT

Transforming Health Care Delivery for Children in Ashiaman, Ghana West Africa: Innovation and Action

Access to quality healthcare and social factors have effects on health outcomes. Children are especially vulnerable in their early years¹. Childhood health status is known to influence health outcomes in adulthood². One in 12 Ghanaian children under the age of five die from mostly preventable childhood diseases. Individuals are 2.3 times more likely to have children in Ghana than in the United States. The maternal mortality rate is 319 deaths per 100,000 individuals, compared to 14 in the United States³. Here, we sought to determine the healthcare needs of children in the community and accessibility to available resources. Secondly, we wanted to determine innovative ways to meet the need of children and families in the community. Lastly, we analyzed the landscape to assess need and potentially build a state of the art children hospital in Ghana. Within the greater Accra urban area serving a population of 1.6 million people, there is only one children healthcare center within the government hospital and a privately run children's hospital. There is no children's hospital in Ashiaman. Children often do not receive any specialized medical care, and are treated by a general physician in a clinic. Families can rarely afford the cost of transportation to get to the main hospital, and often don't see the value in spending the money they do have on a sick child. We began by conducting a survey to screen children from birth to 25 years of age to determine if the children were meeting the developmental milestones, yearly physical exams and or necessary vaccination. The goal of the survey was to assess the needs of the community needs, evaluate the availability of resources and the need for an innovative healthcare facility to provide care and improve lives of infant, children, and maternal mortality rate. Parents were asked general questions on dental care, vaccination, ophthalmology visits. A team of twenty surveyors was able to connect with the Ashaiman community near Tema-Accra to complete the survey. About 300 parents completed the survey. We collected 280/300 questionnaires, we learned that the majority of parents had not taken their children to see a pediatric doctor or had a dental, hearing and visual screening since they were born. Based on the results of our survey, most children have never had any form of health care screening performed on them. About 97% of children in the Ashiaman region never had a dental examination, 95% have never received a hearing test and 94% never had an eye exam. The healthcare status of the children in this community is requires action. With this data at hand, Amazing Grace Children's Foundation conducted a medical mission in January 2016, with specialty doctors and advance practice nurses who performed the screening as part of a gift to the community. We provided care to approximately 400-children. The mission of our organization is innovatively work towards helping in achieving the Millennium Development Goals: a) to further reduce childhood mortality rates, b) Decrease maternal mortality and c) Improve health through education and equality among all. We aim in achieving this by conducted routine medical missions and continue to build the children hospital in that area.

¹Quansah, E., Ohene, L. A., Norman, L., Mireku, M. O., & Karikari, T. K. (2016). Social Factors Influencing Child Health in Ghana. *PLoS ONE*, *11*(1), e0145401.

<http://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0145401>

²Banks, J., Oldfield, Z., and Smith, J. (2011). "The Role of Childhood Health on Later Life Outcomes in England and America", NBER Working Paper 17096.

³World Health Organization (2016). <http://www.afro.who.int/en/ghana/country-health-profile.html>