



“For a good future, do something good for mothers and children.” Dr. Cynthia Maung

In November 2022, Project HANDS heeded the call, with a cervical cancer prevention outreach trip, under the auspices of the Women’s Health Initiative (WHI).

The benefit of the program to mothers is readily obvious, but what about the children? In fact, cervical cancer affects the entire family, as a sufferer is unable to attend to her children and other responsibilities. In addition, research shows that children orphaned due to cervical cancer are likely to suffer from undernourishment, neglect and higher than average mortality. The good news is that early detection, when a woman is asymptomatic, can prevent cervical cancer and save lives.



Meet Our Dream Team

Our team was comprised of Brigitte Weber, MD (Sarnen, Obwalden, Switzerland), Lorie Luckie, NP (Maui, Hawaii, USA) and Denise Richardson, RN (Mayne Island, BC, Canada), under the leadership of WHI Director Gary Jackson, MD (White Rock, BC, Canada). They were supported by dedicated local volunteers, whose contribution to our work was invaluable.

Where We Worked...And Why

We proudly partnered with Mae Tao Clinic (MTC) in Mae Sot, Thailand, on the Myanmar border. We chose that region because of the predominance of displaced refugees who have fled Myanmar to escape war and oppression. MTC was founded by Dr. Cynthia Maung, herself a refugee. It serves a broad range of ethnicities, including a large contingent of patients from the Karen State of Myanmar. Women in Mae Sot are at risk for cervical cancer, due to the prevalence of the cancer-causing HPV virus and lack of screening programs.



Our Methodology

Our methodology is JPIEGO’s “see & treat,” or VIA (visual inspection with acetic acid). A vinegar wash is applied to the cervix, followed by visual inspection. The technique does not require a laboratory, and the results are available immediately. If white precursor lesions are present, thermal ablation treatment is administered on the spot, reducing the number of patients who do not attend follow-up visits. Within weeks, healthy cells replace those affected by the HPV virus, and no further treatment is needed. According to the American Medical Association and National Cancer Institute, it is the most cost-effective (fewest dollars spent per life-year saved) cervical cancer prevention strategy for resource-constrained countries.

By the Numbers

Over 8 days we screened 696 women and administered 45 thermal ablation treatments to women who tested positive for the HPV virus. 3 women were referred to a hospital in another city for cancer treatment, because they had never been screened and we got to them too late. This is what we aim to prevent.



“My mother died of cervical cancer, because it was detected too late. My son needs a mother. That is why I came for screening.”

Spotlight on Ma Hlaing Aung

Statistics help to measure our success, but each patient has a personal story. After testing positive and receiving thermal ablation treatment, Ma Hlaing Aung told us, “My mother died of cervical cancer, because it was detected too late. My son needs a mother. That is why I came for screening.” Her story is not unique. We heard it repeated many times. We were struck by how often the lack of access to screening stands between a woman and a simple, potentially life-saving exam.

Teach a Woman to Fish

The ultimate success of the WHI program is measured by self-sustainability. To that end, WHI focuses on training and upskilling local medical personnel who share our commitment to eradicating cervical cancer. We worked side-by-side with 7 MTC doctors, nurses and midwives, who were as eager to learn as we were to teach.

A Word of Thanks

We wish to thank Jeanny Hamilton, Program Coordinator, for months of tireless efforts behind the scenes, to ensure the success of the initiative.

Our Work Continues

Project HANDS’ work continues because of the generosity of our donors. Thank you for believing in and partnering with us. Please consider making a donation now, to support equitable healthcare for some of the world’s most underserved communities. Visit www.projecthands.org to help. In the spirit of the holiday season, what greater gift could you possibly give?



Please continue to the next 2 pages for a glimpse through our lens.



Many HANDS make light work.



Shish-ka-swabs



Moe Moe



Nwe Nwe Win



Two heads are better than one.



Three heads are better than two.



Kyu Kyu Mar



Our indefatigable team



The eyes have it.



Our new thermal ablation device



So little can do so much.



Na Moo Bway



Teamwork



Second opinion



The student becomes the teacher.



Gi Phya



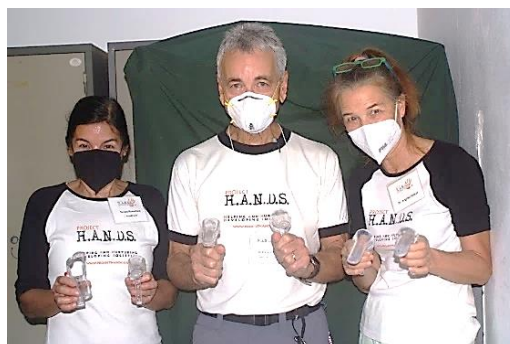
Reassuring the patient



Dotting the i's & crossing the t's



Ommar Win Pe



Speculums make great castanets.
After all, what's life
without a little whimsy?