

## **Kimberley Dental Team May 2013 Update**

We are now between trips and preparing for a return to the Kimberley in August for the 12<sup>th</sup> trip since our first in May 2009.

At the beginning of May, after flying up to Gibb River community to provide a day of dental care, John and Jan flew back to Willare Roadhouse and met up with Dr Brian Hurwitz and Mylita Power who had driven the new KDT Dental Trailer (KDTT) across from Broome. En route to Halls Creek, we provided a dental service at the Fitzroy Family Centre and the communities of Pandanus Park, Bayulu and Muludja where we were very well received. The new Toyota Land Cruiser and Dental Trailer combo performed beautifully and on the evening in Fitzroy we christened the BBQ with delicious Yeeda Station steaks.

Once in Halls Creek we readied ourselves for the incoming team who arrived from Kununurra on Sunday afternoon excited and ready for a busy week. As it had been two years since KDT had provided check ups to all school children in Halls Creek and the eight communities we visit regularly, this was a primary focus. The teams split up into 4 groups to staff the hospital dental clinic, the KAMSC truck parked in the school grounds, the KDTT van parked opposite the local IGA, nicknamed the 'IGA clinic' and the screening teams.

The school teams visited most classes at Halls Creek District High School and all classes at Red Hill, Balgo, Billiluna, Mulan, Ringers Soak, Yiyili, Frog Hollow and Warmun. Check ups were carried out on 493 children and of those, 189 did not require any treatment. We were able to treat 126 of those in need and plan to follow up with as many of the remainder as possible in August. Service delivery for the children has increased dramatically thanks to the incredible school principals, aboriginal liaison and teaching staff and staff in the Halls Creek hospital and community clinics who very promptly facilitated parental consent.

The partnership between KDT and the WA Healthy Schools Project (WAHSP) in providing schools with a year round supply of toothbrushing supplies. The importance placed on oral health by schools and the children's toothbrushing and oral health status has improved dramatically over the past 5 years. It was exciting to see that the Strong Teeth for Kimberley Kids daily toothbrushing program has taken off and is being so well maintained in many schools particularly in the communities, where the kids teeth are much cleaner than in previous years. Every school and even different classes seem to have evolved their own routine for toothbrushing and it is brilliant when kids eagerly show you their labelled KDT red carry bag hanging next to the class sink, where they brush their teeth every morning.

Community visits included Balgo and Billiluna in week two, Mulan, Ringer Soak, Balgo and Yiyili in week three and Frog Hollow and Warmun in week four. The new KDT Lotterywest Toyota and McCusker KDTT dental trailer behaved admirably on the notorious Tanami Road and Duncan Highway as well as managing the rough and often slippery tracks into Muludja, Yiyili and Frog Hollow. These new additions have made for much greater flexibility and productivity.

In addition to providing oral health education and check ups for 493 children, 512 general dental appointments were undertaken, providing 408 examinations, 228 extractions, 255 restorations, 61 scale and cleans, 55 radiographs, 30 fluoride treatments and 392 fissure seals. In all, this represents approximately \$110,000 worth of free dental care, assistance and advice.

Our May KDT team provided the equivalent of 37 weeks of care and was made up of 25 volunteers including John and Jan, and Dr Jilen Patel who volunteered from weeks two, through to four. And of course our KDT Oral Health Officer Robyn Long, who with her local know-how covered the on-ground logistics with ease whether it be from finding parents to having consent forms signed, providing culturally appropriated oral health education or lining up and controlling

patient flow into the 4 different KDT clinic locations in Halls Creek!

As Victorian volunteer, Dr Clare Lin so aptly states: *"I was part of the May 2013 Kimberley Dental Team and found it an eye opening and hugely satisfying experience. It was wonderful that Robyn, the KDT Oral Health Officer, was part of the team and could help us with our patients each day. As a local, she was able to share important information about the communities we worked in. She was also great at explaining procedures to our Indigenous patients and making them feel more relaxed in the dental chair. I believe it is vital to continue to have local health workers involved with KDT, to help to provide a strong link between the dental volunteers and our patients."*

May 2013 Team members:

*Week 1.* Dr Brian Hurwitz and DA Mylita Power, John and Jan

*Week 2.* Dr Jilen Patel, Dr Brian Hurwitz, Dr Holly Edwards, Dr Clare Lin (Melbourne), DA Mylita Power, DA Rozelle Collinson, Alex Easton, final year dental students Luke Rodman and Michael Chan and Jan, John and Robyn Long.

*Week 3.* Dr John Winters and Mary Winters, Dr Andrea Westerhaut, Dr Erin Hardie, DA Emily van Rooyen, and a second week for the two students Luke and Michael, Jilen, Robyn, Jan and John.

*Week 4.* Dr Ho Jin Yoo, Dr Jenni Bowman, Dr Nam Nguyen, DA Lesley McKenzie, DA Suzanne Baumann (Sydney), DA Trinh Nguyen, Jan, John and Jilen. In Warmun we were joined by toothbrushing program champion Trish Pepper from Kimberley Population Health Unit (KPHU), the WA Healthy Schools Officer for the Kimberley and by Lori Black, Cancer Council of WA regional education officer who helped us with classroom education and patient management.

Always, as a counter balance to all this work we manage to have a lot of fun. Evening meals are always a highlight as everyone shares the cooking and clean up as well as a few quiet drinks and many laughs. The young team members convert the rest of us to Apple and improve our IT skills and older members share their years of experience and varying techniques. On Wednesday evenings teams make a trip out to China Wall to explore and enjoy the beauty of this amazing place. Our Friday evening sausage sizzle, sundowners around a campfire at Caroline Pool are a great opportunity to unwind, maybe have a swim and enjoy some star gazing. As for challenges, we thought that Tim Clair's famous campfire kangaroo tail at Caroline Pool last year was unbeatable but it was trumped in Warmun with Nam and Trinh cooking up a King Brown snake (killed by a teacher on the school oval) on the new KDTT BBQ. It was delicious – so they say!!

**A big thank you** to our fabulous volunteers, sponsors, supporters and especially the businesses and people in Halls Creek and surrounds who, by their generosity and ongoing support, make our task much easier. This includes Chris Loessl and Virginia O'Neill who, with the support of several businesses, hosted a very delicious 'Thank you KDT after work picnic' at China Wall.

Everyone who has ever been involved with KDT should all be very proud of what has, and continues, to be achieved.

The KDT website has just been upgraded thanks to the generosity of Dale May who has put in many hours to produce the fabulous new look. Check out the [new website](#) and [photos](#) of the May trip.

Jan and John Owen

**Kimberley Dental Team** [dentalteam.com](http://dentalteam.com)