



RESEARCH

HEI CLINICIAN PUBLISHES NICU RESEARCH IN PRESTIGIOUS JOURNAL

Dr. Scipion and a global team of researchers are helping improve NICU care by investigating antibiotic usage.

Dr. Catherine Scipion, Health Equity International/St. Boniface Hospital's (HEI/SBH) academic affairs coordinator, is the co-author of a paper recently published in *The Lancet's* online journal *EClinicalMedicine*. Titled *A Global Point Prevalence Survey of Antimicrobial Use in Neonatal Intensive Care Units*, the study examines **how antimicrobial agents** (medicines like antibiotics that kill bacteria) **are used in neonatal intensive care units** (NICUs) around the world.

“[Premature births] are a challenge in NICUs, especially when you are looking at diagnosing a possible infection,” explains Dr. Scipion. “There are several features of prematurity that are similar to those of infection.” Because of the similarities between the two conditions, antibiotics are often used as a preventative measure against a suspected infection. However, their **overuse can lead to the rise of multidrug-resistant organisms and severe health consequences** for patients.

In their study of 84 hospitals across 29 countries, the authors found that antibiotics were being given to NICU patients even if no infection was detected. **They concluded that most hospitals would benefit from antibiotic stewardship programs (ASPs).** These programs help to refine protocols for antibiotic usage by strengthening monitoring and evaluation of patient outcomes, infection rates, and resistance patterns.

Thanks in large part to Dr. Scipion's work, SBH is developing its own ASP to ensure our most vulnerable infants receive the most targeted care possible. In doing so, Dr. Scipion will continue to strengthen and elevate research at HEI/SBH.



Top: Dr. Scipion shares what health equity means to her.

Bottom: A baby heals in our NICU.

“ [PREMATURE BIRTHS] ARE A CHALLENGE IN NICUS, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU ARE LOOKING AT DIAGNOSING A POSSIBLE INFECTION. ”



A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Conor Shapiro
President & CEO

Dear Friends,

One year ago, HEI/SBH was called upon to **lead the COVID-19 response for southern Haiti**. Although we had prepared for months to take on this important role, I can still remember how daunting those early days of the pandemic felt. We simply did not know how COVID-19 would impact Haiti—or how it would change the world.

Yet no matter how many challenges and uncertainties arose in the months that followed, our staff never wavered in their belief that **we would keep our patients and community members safe** throughout this crisis.

Neither did you.

Even as COVID-19 impacted your own life, **you knew that families in southern Haiti wanted to stay safe and healthy just like yours**. Thanks to your generosity, we have provided **over 64,000 patients with COVID-19 testing, treatment, and education services**. And with your help, we have kept SBH open and fully operational throughout the pandemic.

As you will learn in this newsletter, COVID-19 has impacted Haiti in unpredictable ways. But one thing is clear: **inequities exacerbated by the pandemic are causing health consequences that are just as life-threatening as the virus itself**. And yet, as Haiti and other resource-limited settings face the brunt of these consequences, they will be among the last countries to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

While the challenges that remain are great, the tireless dedication of our staff, the indomitable spirit of our patients, and the passion of supporters like you have given me so much hope. **Thank you for remaining by our side** as together, we work to build a healthier world.

Kenbe fem,

Conor Shapiro
President & CEO
Health Equity International

COMMUNITY HEALTH

THE UNEXPECTED IMPACTS OF COVID-19

The pandemic's devastating impact on Haiti's economy, food supply, and health system may be more life-threatening than the virus itself.

As much of the world starts to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, **SBH staff continues to see the far-reaching consequences of health inequity in Haiti**. While the disease is no longer a direct threat to most of our patients, they are suffering from its ancillary effects, including a steep rise in food insecurity. Lisa Eppich, HEI's development and communications manager, spoke with **Miss Claudine Joseph Bernard, SBH's head community health nurse**, to find out how our community health team is combatting this crisis:

LE: *What has been surprising about how the pandemic has impacted Haiti so far?*

Claudine Bernard: There is a clear connection between food insecurity and the pandemic. People were told not to go outside unless necessary; this meant that the farmers' market everyone goes to became paralyzed. Many vendors [stayed home]...it became difficult to find food to eat. The economy is [also] in decline. With the lack of money and scarcity of food products, people have lost weight.

LE: *How has the community health team helped to mitigate the impact of this food insecurity?*

CB: Our staff has nutritional recovery clinics in the communities we serve. We have an outpatient program for severe cases of malnutrition and a nutritional supplementation program for moderate cases. **We have distributed over 500 food kits for underweight children.** We educate parents continuously.

“ THERE IS A CLEAR CONNECTION BETWEEN FOOD INSECURITY AND THE PANDEMIC. ”

LE: *In addition to the malnutrition screenings you normally do at rally posts, you also did an intensive malnutrition screening campaign this spring. Is that correct?*

CB: Yes, we really wanted to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the nutritional status of children in our communities. In addition, **Fond des Blancs**

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Miss Claudine outside of her office at St. Boniface Hospital.

CB (cont.): has just been classified as a “red zone” for food insecurity. The malnutrition screening campaign in March and April targeted children 6-30 months old at our 43 rally posts, and children 3-6 years old in more than 67 schools. The results of this campaign will help distinguish acute malnutrition from being underweight. **That way we can put in place better strategies to fight malnutrition.**

LE: Are we seeing any other ancillary effects of the pandemic in our communities in addition to food insecurity?

CB: Patients are going to the hospital infrequently out of fear of contracting COVID-19. **This has led to irregular monitoring of patients with chronic conditions** such as hypertension, diabetes, tuberculosis, and HIV. We had to reduce a lot of our community activities to prevent COVID-19 transmission.

LE: How else is the community health team supporting working to mitigate these effects?

CB: **The fear of the disease we were able to remove with awareness and education in the communities.** Our team members go to each child’s house to administer vaccines and do daily door-to-door house calls. If a child is malnourished...you have to go to their home. We brought together all of the grassroots organizations in the area to collaborate on COVID-19 surveillance. **We trained all of our community health workers to continue COVID-19 awareness activities** and encourage people to come to the hospital if they need to.



A community health worker performs a malnutrition screening on a young patient.

HEI/SBH’S COVID-19 RESPONSE

HEI/SBH’s clinicians and staff have worked around the clock to care for tens of thousands of patients amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Our impact is measured by **lives saved, communities protected, and health professionals empowered to provide safe and effective care:**

1 world-class **COVID-19 treatment center** constructed

13 lab technicians trained to conduct **COVID-19 testing**

15 **oxygen concentrators** and **five ventilators** obtained to provide lifesaving care

63 community health workers provided **contact tracing** and **COVID-19 transmission surveillance** for **50,000+** community members

400+ staff trainings held on **COVID-19 care and infection control protocols**

500+ **food kits** distributed to underweight children

520+ community health events held to provide **primary care** and **health screenings**

64,000+ patients educated, tested, and treated for **COVID-19**

DONOR PROFILE



Mary's grandson Joshua.

Why I Give: Mary Pellerin

Mary Pellerin, a Vermont native who was widowed at 25 and raised three children on her own, knows the difference a little generosity can make.

Generosity is something she passed down to her children and grandchildren, especially her grandson Joshua. "He always put others first," Mary says, "He had a special spark." When he passed away as a college freshman, Mary wanted a way to honor his memory and keep his generous spirit alive.

“I'M SURE JOSHUA WOULD BE PROUD
BE TO BE PART OF HEI'S WORK.”

That's where HEI/SBH came in. Mary learned about the hospital after Hurricane Matthew devastated southern Haiti in 2016. She remembered her own visit to Haiti many years ago. As she learned more about our work and commitment to health equity, Mary felt moved to make a gift in her grandson's memory. "I'm sure Joshua would be proud to be part of HEI's work," she said. Mary has continued to contribute to the hospital every month since then, always in honor of Joshua.

It is not easy for Mary to speak about Joshua, and she feels the pain of his loss every day. But she knows that by sharing his memory and the selfless way he lived, his special spark will continue to spread.

For info about becoming a monthly donor,
contact Rachel Ross at rross@haitihealth.org.



SAVE THE DATE!

October 6, 2021

7PM EST

HEI Virtual Gala

Honoring Rev. John Unni

HEI Board Member

Pastor at Saint Cecilia Parish

Our Mission

Health Equity International is dedicated to providing **essential health services** to the people of southern Haiti, especially the most vulnerable. We are committed to building a **comprehensive, efficient, and resilient health system** that provides high quality care. We believe that ensuring access to life-saving and life-changing health services is a critical component to building strong and productive communities.

Stay up-to-date!

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