



UB volunteers, enroute from Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, to rural village of Quixmixto, pose for group photo. They are, from left, Rachel Botelho, Sharla Seunarine, pediatric dentist Dian Wells, Cosmina Olariu.



Left: At Quixmixto, Dr. Wells examines young patient, while another waits her turn.



Above: Youngsters from village of Quixmixto wait patiently to be seen by dental volunteers. Most had never been seen by a dentist.



Below: Ms. Seunarine and Ms. Botelho help with screening of youngsters.

On the Job Training

Mission to Mexico provides eye-opening experience for UB dental students.

Rachel Botelho; Cosmina Olariu

EARLY THIS PAST AUGUST, we participated in the first of what organizers hope will become an annual Dental Service to Mexico. We were accompanied by Sharla Seunarine, who, like us, is a third-year student at the University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine, and by pediatric dentist Dian Wells.

In the course of a week, we worked at three different sites around Puerto Vallarta. The first two days were spent tending to the oral needs of children and their *madres* (caretakers) at the Children's Shelter of Hope Foundation and Refugio Infantil Santa Esperanza. We set up our dental equipment at the orphanage for two days, during which time we made charts for the children and *madres*. We showed the children how to brush their teeth, and we placed sealants in their 6- and 12-year-old molars. We brought along equipment to perform fillings on children with cavities, and we also did cleanings on the *madres* and children. Each child received a toothbrush and a toy after his or her visit.

It was great getting to know all the wonderful children at the orphanage.

On the third day, we traveled to an area of Mexico called Quixmixto, which is accessible only by boat. This was an eye-opening experience, since most of the children had never been seen by a dentist. We screened 100 children and some adults and completed many extractions, fillings, sealants and cleanings. We were even able to improve the appearance of two young girls, whose front teeth were discolored and malformed at birth, by using composite resin. The girls were very appreciative with the end result. At mid-day the schoolteacher in town invited us to her house for a deli-

cious lunch. We worked until dusk so that we could see as many children as possible. This is an area to which we hope to take oral surgeons, residents and more dental students in the future for more extensive work.

On the fourth day, we traveled to Pasitos de Luz in Pittital. This is a daycare center for disabled children. Here we performed cleanings on 40 children using donated spinbrushes and fluoride treatments. We left behind many donated dental supplies at the center, and we instructed staff on the use of fluoride treatments on the children.

We brought with us six suitcases filled with dental equipment and donated supplies. Many dentists, hospitals and the UB dental school were very generous in giving us dental supplies, such as sealant and filling material, charts, operative equipment, amalgam tritulators, resin curing lights and anesthesia. Donations also included more than 500 toothbrushes and tubes of toothpaste, which we gave to the orphanage.

We had a great experience and want to ensure that this will be a yearly outreach program. We have heard from many other dental students and dentists who are interested in participating in this project in the future.

In the meantime, we are in great need of more operative instruments, in particular, a portable handpiece kit, although we welcome any type of donations. Please contact Rachel Botelho at rsherfey@hotmail.com for mailing information. ■

Mrs. Botelho and Ms. Olariu are members of the University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine Class of 2006.