



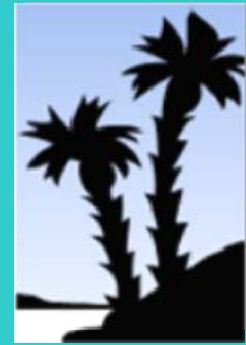
Michael, Elizabeth & Anita

Dohn Family

Mission E-mail

SAMS Missionaries in Health Ministries

Dominican Republic



Anita Dohn, MD
Michael Dohn, MD
San Pedro de Macorís
República Dominicana

Website:

DohnFamily.org

E-mail:

DohnFamily@sams-usa.org



SAMS Missionaries

Commissioned by the
Diocese of Southern Ohio

Working with
La Iglesia Episcopal
Dominicana

AIDS Support Group Meeting

I recently attended a meeting of an AIDS Support Group. This was the first of two groups started by the Clinic about five years ago when there were not even any AIDS treatment centers in this Province. It meets at a local Pentecostal church. Several people at the Clinic needed someone to drive them to the meeting and to pick-up some snacks along the way; I was drafted as the driver.

After the beginning prayers, people were animated and almost rowdy as the discussions progressed. The topic was the Dominican law regarding employment and other discrimination related to a person's HIV status. People related their personal experiences of discrimination, both at work and in other settings. The group commiserated together, offered suggestions, and generally supported one another. There were 32 people there plus six children (three of whom I know are HIV-infected). Overall, it was an upbeat and high-energy gathering.

I had not been to a meeting of that group for several years. After helping to clean-up, I drove several people home, including the group's President. I remarked to her that the atmosphere within the group was different than it had been in past years. She laughed and said, "Remember when we used to have eight people at a meeting and at the next biweekly meeting there were only seven of us and we didn't have much to say because we had just seen each other at the funeral three days before? Members were dying faster than they were joining! Those were depressing times." Well, times change.

We continue to diagnose one new HIV infection out of every 20 people who come for HIV testing at the Clinic and continue to enroll new patients at the treatment center. Alongside the HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, support groups and social programs are becoming more important – whether it is addressing job discrimination or assuring that AIDS-affected children have school supplies. Seems like this is one of those areas where things are getting better even as the needs keep expanding.

Keep praying, Michael