
PORTABLE MISSION DENTISTRY

Ron Lamb, D.M.D.



Portable Mission Dentistry

Portable (pōr'tā·bl) adj. capable of being transported easily.

Mission (mish'en) adj. being sent on some special work or service.

Dentistry (dĕn'tis·trē) n. the art and science of diagnosing and treating the oral cavity.

Ron Lamb D.M.D.



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BY

DR. RON LAMB

World Dental Relief

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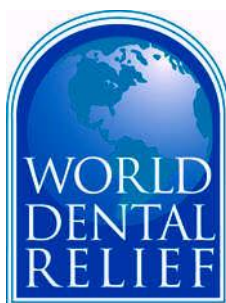
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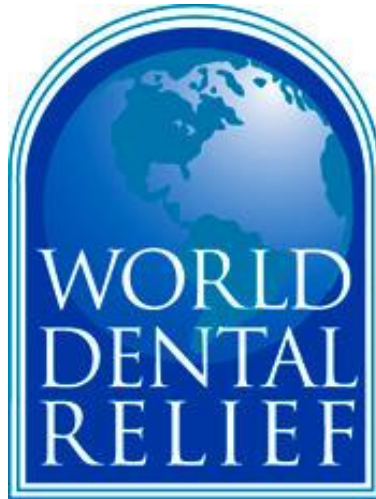
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Ron Lamb has been traveling to other countries since 1964 working with various missionaries to help the under privileged and needy. He saw the overwhelming need for dental care and the lack of trained dental personnel to deal with the tremendous needs overseas. The goal he set in life was to obtain his dental degree and use his professional skills to help others on the mission field.

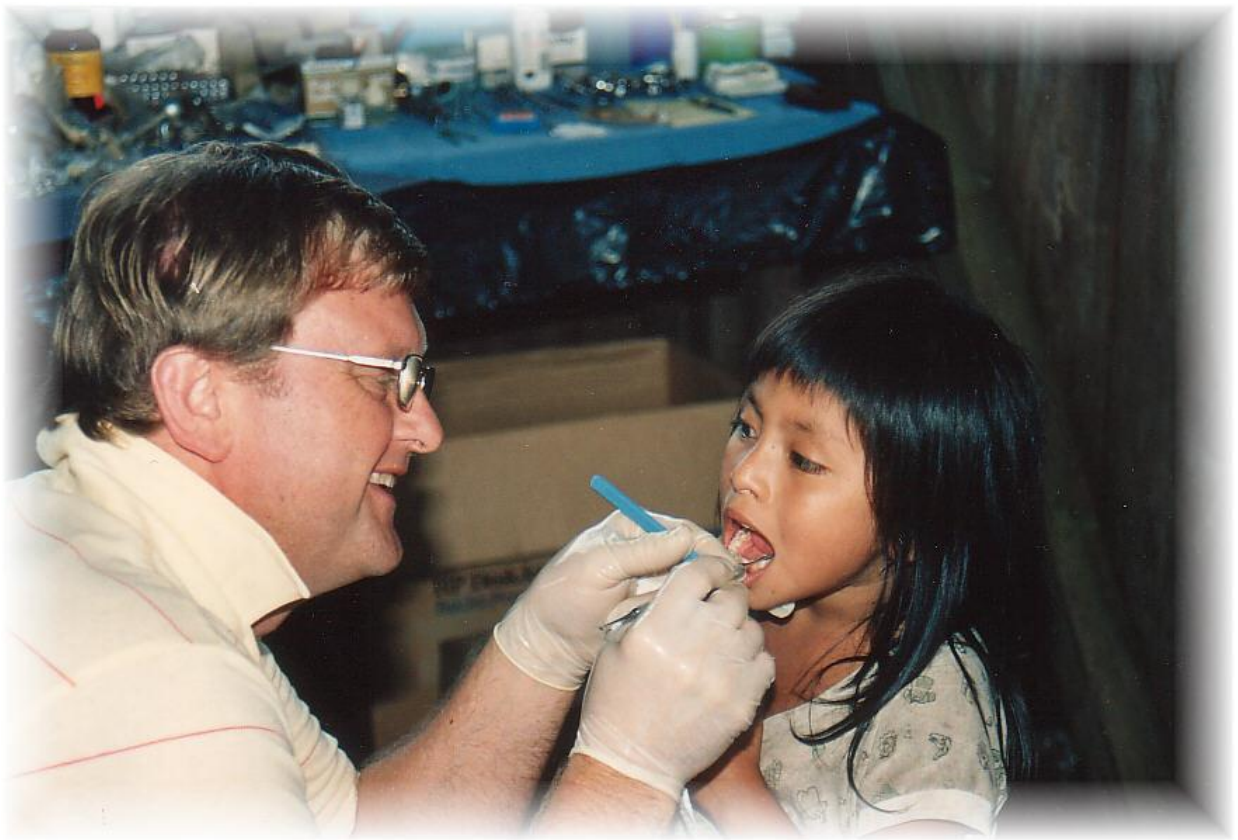
Dr. Lamb graduated from Oral Roberts University with a B.S. in 1969 and then from the University of Louisville Dental School in 1974. He established a private practice in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma where he married his wife Pam and together they have been actively involved with dental missions work.

World Dental Relief was established in 1976 as a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation to promote dental missions. A medical/dental clinic was built in 1980 at Monterrey, Mexico as a base for health care teams to work throughout Mexico. Some fifty-six teams worked through the clinic over the next twelve-year period. Then the clinic was given to nationals to continue its service to the community.

The first Dental Mission Warehouse was built in 1984 and obtained State and Federal licenses to operate as a drug wholesale warehouse. The second warehouse was purchased in 2003 to accommodate larger semi sized truck loads of supplies. The two Dental Mission Warehouses have placed over \$10 million in donated dental supplies on the mission field to clinics, hospitals and dental schools overseas.

On December 15, 1991, Dr. Lamb closed his private practice for full-time mission service and has been on over 160 mission trips to more 70 countries. He also lectures, advises and writes about dental missions. Dr. Lamb has an ongoing interest in research and development of portable equipment for dentistry.

Dr. Lamb continues to make mission trips himself and actively solicits other dental/health care professionals to become actively involved with volunteer service to help those in need at home and abroad.



To the world you may be only one person,
But to one person you may be the world,
Because you touched them **with compassion**,
Touched their heart **with love...**
And relieved their pain.

FORWARD

This manual is a broad overview of some of the major facets of portable dental health care delivery to underserved and unreached populations. With developments happening so quickly, particularly in equipment design, it is impossible to include all projects being conducted through federal, state, university and world organizations. It is important that some basic principles be outlined as a foundation to the study of portable dental care. The objective of this manual is to outline some fundamental considerations for anyone wishing to prepare one's self for this type of service.



WDR shipped more than one ton of anesthetic and filling material to New Orleans to supply a huge tent clinic with 75 portable chairs staffed by over 400 dental volunteers from 38 states. More than 6,000 people were treated with over \$2 million dollars of free dentistry in six and one-half days.



Turning donated supplies into smiles...



INTRODUCTION

“Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.”
Matthew 28: 19-20

In the Great Commission Jesus commands us to “Go”! As a dentist, have you ever felt that you were being called to serve others in foreign countries? Does this idea of using your gifts as a dentist to bring strangers to the Lord sound fulfilling? Then, you are preparing to “go” through reading this book. You are about to embark on a journey that could change the course of your life.

This book is intended to help Christian dentists have success on their missions. Your mission might be in your own town or on the other side of the world. But, wherever it is, the setting is outside of your office, outside of where you know what you have and how to use it. In mission work, you may be asked to work in a home, a school or under a tree. To be prepared, you need to understand what is in this manual before you are in the field. Once you are prepared, you can serve more effectively.

The Lord commanded us to go, but not without training. The Book of Acts is filled with examples of teaching and training of churches and missionaries. Professional missionaries may spend several years in training before going into the field. As a dentist, you have the skills to perform dental services, but that is just the beginning. Now you need to prepare for using those skills to serve outside of your normal world.

Organizing your team and your supplies for dental mission is only the first step. You need to know how to establish contacts in your destination. You need to understand the dental needs in the areas where you will go. You need to know what support you will have and what you will not have. As a dentist, you need to know how to lead a dental team and what to do when unforeseen challenges arise.

Dr. Ron Lamb has spent most of his life preparing for missions. While practicing as a general dentist, Ron participated in over 100 mission trips. Since retiring from dentistry in 1991, Ron has focused on his personal mission and has grown World Dental Relief (WDR). With Ron's guidance and leadership, WDR has become the key support organization for national and international dental missions work. If you have only thought about joining a dental mission or have a trip already planned, you will gain great insights and knowledge through reading this book.

On behalf of World Dental Relief, we would like to thank you for using this manual to make your dental mission work more effective. As you read and

learn, remember that you are gaining the knowledge Dr. Lamb has acquired from trips to over 70 countries across the globe. We hope and pray that you are prepared before you go, so that the impact of your dental missions can be focused on bringing Word to people that you help through your dental service. As our mission states: "Bringing the Word to the world through dental care."

May the Lord bless your efforts and may you find great blessings in the faces of those you care for.

Fred L. Sharpe, DDS, JD

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Director of Financing
World Dental Relief

If you have additional questions as you read, or need equipment or supplies for your trip, please contact:

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Table of Contents

ORIENTATION

Chapter 1	The Need for Portable Dentistry.....	1
Chapter 2	Keys to Successful Portable Dentistry.....	3
Chapter 3	Theory and Psychology	5
Chapter 4	Providers of Portable Dental Care.....	11
Chapter 5	Opportunities and Challenges.....	17

SPECIFIC GROUND WORK: PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS

Chapter 6	Country For Your Mission.....	33
Chapter 7	Who Do You Plan To Work Through?.....	47
Chapter 8	Legalities and Document Requirements.....	53

PREPLANNING AND ORGANIZATIONS

Chapter 9	Transportation of Equipment and Supplies.....	93
Chapter 10	Availability of Electric and Water.....	113
Chapter 11	Decide Your Parameters of Service.....	123

WORK PLANNING

Chapter 12	Instruments, Medicine and Supplies.....	129
Chapter 13	Quantities of Supplies Needed.....	135
Chapter 14	Portable Dental Equipment.....	141
Chapter 15	Mobile Dentistry.....	291

WORK

Chapter 16	Set-up of Portable Dental Clinic.....	337
Chapter 17	Using ART in Mission Dentistry.....	347
Chapter 18	Establishing a Mission Dental Clinic or Laboratory.....	357
Chapter 19	Communication in Another Country.....	365
Chapter 20	Sharing Your Testimony with Patients.....	371
Chapter 21	Sharing Your Experiences at Home.....	377



There is no pain...like dental pain.



Chapter 1

THE NEED FOR PORTABLE DENTISTRY

Most dental offices are equipped with large hydraulic dental chairs, a compressor, drill unit, cabinets and an array of equipment that could not easily be moved out of the dental office. What does a dentist do when asked to go to a nursing home, institution, home bedside, or hospital to treat the dental needs of a patient who is not mobile? What about sterilization, x-rays, lab work, or even doing a simple cleaning? How would a dentist pack if asked to go to another country to treat patients for one or two weeks? The task would seem impossible if you look at today's modern dental office with its sophisticated heavy equipment.

There is no question that there are many needy patients in our society and world for portable dentistry. But how do we deliver modern dentistry to people who cannot access dental care? Third world populations represent the greatest need. Many times there are fewer than a dozen dentists for an entire country with millions of people. In those countries, vast segments of the population have no access to dental care. Only the wealthy or politicians can obtain service.

Children cry themselves to sleep at night with toothaches and adults try to find a way to break off the abscessed tooth so it can drain. That way, their face will not swell and the pain will be lessened. A dental abscess can be life threatening. It is not uncommon to see fistulas out the side of the mandible or even out of the face and scar tissue from years of fulminating infection. There is no pain like dental pain.

Leaders of these third world countries recognize the overwhelming need for medical doctors and modern hospital facilities. While they recognize their people's need for dental care, they are forced to prioritize medical care as the most important because of political and economic necessity.

Dentistry requires special equipment and hand instruments that are in short supply in third world countries. Usually there is no formal dental school for training dentists due to lack of teachers, equipment, and government funds for dental education.

Dental care ranges from a stick and rock to break off the offending tooth, to a dentist who may travel there to practice modern dentistry after being trained in one of the more progressive countries offering formal dental education.

Some populations and people groups are isolated by natural or cultural barriers. Modern medicine and dentistry never reach into some of the most remote areas of the world. Dental offices are not normally found high in the Andes Mountains or in dense tropical forests.

Then there are small segments of our own population in nursing homes, hospitals, and institutions where access to full service dentistry is limited. There is an estimated 2.2 million people in the United States who are unable to go to the traditional dental office. Individuals bedfast at home have much difficulty finding a dentist able to deliver home care. A big part of this problem of delivering portable dental care is the need for adequate equipment.

As you can see, there are a multitude of applications for portable dentistry in our world. But, the dentist must have the desire and the proper equipment to meet these challenges. Some of this so-called “portable equipment” is so large that it must be airlifted by helicopter for the military. Personally, I do not consider that type of equipment portable. It should be called “mobile dental equipment”, meaning it can be moved from place to place provided you have adequate transportation equipment to move it.

Other dental equipment is so small it will fit into an average size suitcase. I would call this type of equipment truly “portable”. This lighter dental equipment is highly portable, easy to use and easy to move from one place to another. This portable dental equipment will be described and discussed more fully. Then, hopefully you can better decide which type fits your specific need.

In the following chapters, there will be a step-by-step analysis of your mission, its parameters, planning, portable equipment which is available, and how to set up a successful mission trip. The application of these principles, along with the portable equipment, which suits your needs, will make it possible to help those patients who cannot come to you. The information contained in this book should help you see the need for portable dentistry and how you can easily do it on your own.



Line of people waiting for dental care in Ecuador