

AGD

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NEWS FOR THE GENERAL DENTIST

Impact



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 **ACADEMY
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DENTISTRY**



Binder Works Magic in Haiti

Jack Binder, DDS, MAGD, owns a dental practice on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. In 2016, he joined Haiti Marycare to help establish its dental program and now serves as the organization's director of dentistry.

"The first year [I volunteered in Haiti], I realized how huge the need was for basic dental care and how many people had severely broken down and/or infected teeth," said Binder.

Binder is the first dentist most of his Haitian patients have ever met. He said few dentists and no hygienists practice in Haiti.

Binder exclusively performs extractions during his visits, so forceps and elevators are largely the only equipment he uses.

"There seems to be an unending supply of people in pain due to severely infected teeth," Binder said. "I extract the tooth or teeth, and I know they're going to feel a lot better."

This year, Binder instituted a "swish and spit" fluoride program for school children in one of the villages, and he intends to expand it to all the schools in the villages he visits. Community fluoridation doesn't exist, Binder said, as there is no municipal water supply.

Binder travels to Haiti with a small group. Each person pays his or her own expenses, while shared expenses (e.g., lodging, translator costs, generator fuel, etc.) are split among the volunteers.

Haiti has its problems, Binder said, but the people are wonderful. During a fundraising event for an upcoming volunteer trip, he met with a Haitian priest who shared one patient's experience.

"The priest told me about one woman who didn't understand exactly what I did, but she realized when she got home that I had

removed six teeth," Binder said. "She told the priest that I must be a magician!"

Binder admitted that he still doesn't quite know what drives him to volunteer, but he's certain that it makes him feel good.

"I have skills I can use for less fortunate people who desperately need help," he said. "I'm sorry I didn't start doing this kind of work long ago."

For more information on Haiti Marycare, visit haitimarycare.org.

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— Jack Binder, DDS, MAGD

Key Questions to Ask Volunteer Organizations

Asking these questions can help ensure you're prepared before going on a mission trip.

1. What will my days look like when I'm on site?
2. What work- or culture-related challenges should I know about?
3. Whom will I be working with?
4. What does my financial investment go toward?
5. What parts of my trip do I need to organize?
6. What are some packing essentials?
7. What personal items should I leave at home?
8. Will I need to work with a translator?
9. Is the area I'm visiting safe?
10. What air travel (including insurance) and local travel conditions are available?
11. May I charge all expenses on a credit card, or is there local currency I must be prepared to arrange?
12. May I speak with someone who has been there before to help my planning?
13. What information should I be aware of regarding personal health issues, such as vaccinations, allergies, antibiotics on site, food options, sleeping conditions, water and sanitation?
14. What are your best pieces of advice for setting me up for success during my dental mission?

Sources: VolunteerForever.com, Dr. T. Bob Davis