



# Viet Nam Medical Assistance Program (VNMAP)

*“For the good health of the community and the knowledge of the young generation”*

## About VNMAP

The Viet Nam Medical Assistance Program (VNMAP) was started by a group of students from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine and Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. The pilot mission took place in June, 2007. With a team of 11 members including medical doctors, medical students, and volunteers, we served the patients at Dien Khanh Hospital located in Khanh Hoa Province, Viet Nam. During the mission, we realized the great need for medical care of the poor and the minority population in the central region of Viet Nam. Through providing care for these people, it was a great opportunity for the medical students and volunteers to acquire a valuable experience in practicing medicine and learning about the medical system in Viet Nam.

After our first mission, our team built contacts with several charity organizations in Viet Nam that are in critical need of assistance to provide health care to the poor. After working with these organizations, a small group of dedicated members from the pilot mission established VNMAP. From these missions, we set our first priority for VNMAP, which is to provide health services and health education to the many less fortunate people in Viet Nam. At the same time, we want to provide learning opportunities for its participants through these medical missions.

With the overwhelming need and many requests for help, a single team cannot provide the necessary services to all locations. VNMAP is open to collaborating with different medical teams that want to work in Viet Nam and share our vision. Together, we will be able to bring better health to the poor and minority residents in the rural areas of Viet Nam.

While working to promote health for the poor in central region of Vietnam, VNMAP was approached by different people in the Vietnamese communities in the US requesting us to bring health education and awareness program to Vietnamese population in the U.S. Through working with the Vietnamese communities, we found that many families do not have health insurance and there is a lack of knowledge in health problems. These findings have led VNMAP to set another priority: to decrease the knowledge gap in health problems and to promote health in the Vietnamese communities in the U.S

# VNMAP's Mission

VNMAP's mission is to provide medical assistance and medical education to the Vietnamese community and its participants through:

- Addressing the healthcare disparity of the poor in Viet Nam while promoting healthcare awareness through medical assistance, collaborative efforts and education
- Supporting the local Vietnamese community in healthcare and health education
- Enhancing the knowledge of health professionals, medical students, volunteers, and its members in leadership, tropical and global medicine, public health and the health system in Viet Nam

## SERVICE ASPECT OF THE PROGRAM

### Healthcare Services

We will **collaborate** with the local healthcare providers in Viet Nam to **diagnose and treat** acute diseases such as bacterial infections, fungal infections, and parasitic infections

We will **organize** different healthcare programs such as health fairs, free medical consultation for Vietnamese communities in the U.S. Our pilot programs will be in Maryland

### Health Education

**We realize that one of the causes of infections and injuries is the residents' lack of the basic knowledge about disease processes and prevention.**

We will create and implement educational programs to help the residents understand different health topics. The programs will focus on prevalent health concerns in the areas that we serve in Viet Nam and/or in Maryland.

The programs will be presented to the residents with crucial information on modes of transmission, symptoms, treatments, and prevention for the major diseases in the area so that they can understand how to protect their health.

Moreover, we will provide a basic nutritional and environmental health course for the residents to increase their awareness of how their lifestyle and environment can determine their susceptibility to variety of diseases.

Finally, we will hold discussion sections with local healthcare providers/ public health professionals in Viet Nam/ in the United States to exchange their experience on the challenges that they are facing when helping the residents. By learning from one another, we can apply our knowledge to improve future programs in order to further help them .

# **EDUCATION AND TRAINING ASPECT OF THE PROGRAM**

**Our second goal is to give medical students and volunteers an extensive experience in providing healthcare, leading different programs, communicating with patients of a different culture. These experiences will contribute greatly to their future careers and help them become more attentive healthcare providers. As they become our new leaders, they will initiate more missions to continue helping the people in Viet Nam.**

## **Culture and Medicine**

When working in Viet Nam, VNMAP will work in areas where the populations consist of mostly ethnic minorities. On the other hand, while working with the Vietnamese community in the U.S., VNMAP will help the elders, the newcomers, and the poor who cannot afford health insurance. The program's doctors and medical students will have opportunities to learn how to interact with people from other culture and apply this knowledge toward their future practices.

## **International Health**

With the increase in interest in international health, this trip is a great opportunity for medical students to familiarize themselves to tropical medicine and infectious diseases. Students will also learn about the healthcare policy and healthcare system of a developing nation through serving in at rural clinics in Viet Nam.

## **Research Activities**

**Health prevention is an important aspect of medicine. Understanding how people's lifestyles and environment affect health can benefit not only the residents in the area, but also assist the local healthcare providers in developing programs to eliminate health risks.**

During our mission in Viet Nam, a research survey will be conducted during the clinics at each province. The study will focus on the correlations between the residents' daily habits (i.e., diet, sleeping pattern, etc.), their environments (i.e., where they live and work, etc), and their health status.

This study helps us design better educational programs to target the health problems in the area that we serve. It also helps us prepare better for our future missions/activities

The survey data after each mission were analyzed. Along with the data to be collected in the future, a report will be written to reflect the health condition of the residents in these areas.

## **Leadership Training**

VNMAP believes that strong leadership will make a big difference in the community. During its activities and medical mission, VNMAP promote young professional students and volunteers to take leadership positions in our organization and its activities. Through the mentorship from our advisors and the Board of Directors, new leaders in our organization will get the support that they need to fully reach their potential to serve their community.

“Leaders are born to serve”

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