



Gweru Adventist Clinic.

Photo courtesy of Medeline W. Madembo.

Gweru Adventist Health Practice

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Gweru Adventist Health Practice is a medical institution of the Zimbabwe Central Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Overview

Gweru Adventist Health Practice, previously known as Gweru Adventist Dental Clinic, opened in October 1997. It was the third Seventh-day Adventist dental clinic to operate in Zimbabwe, after the establishment of the Adventist Dental Clinic in Bulawayo and the Adventist Orthodontics Services in Harare. The clinic building was constructed in 1994 by the Zambesi Union Mission, now the Zimbabwe Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.¹ Financial assistance for this work came from Colgate-Palmolive Zimbabwe. The clinic building is situated on a five-acre stand, about 1.5 kilometers east of the central business district of the City of Gweru. Gweru is the fifth largest city in Zimbabwe after Harare, Bulawayo, Chitungwiza, and Mutare.

History of the Institution

In 1996, Dr. Flail from the United States of America came as a volunteer to help set up the clinic. He brought with him dental equipment and materials to commence the clinic's operation, but the Health Council of Zimbabwe deferred to issue a certificate to operate the clinic.

In September 1997 Dr. Willie Tabaranza, a dentist from Mountain View College, Bukidnon, Philippines, accepted a call to come and serve at the clinic. He became the first administrator of Gweru Adventist Dental Clinic, while his wife, Rebecca Tabaranza, became a receptionist. Other workers included Miss Daphine, dentist assistant, Mrs. Loveness Moyo, janitor, and Gideon Lela, grounds worker.² The clinic became the first urban Adventist health facility in Central Zimbabwe Conference.

In 1998 Loveness Moyo replaced Miss Daphine as the dental assistant, and Alice Lela joined the staff as janitor. In 2000 Gweru had a population of about 250,000,³ with only four dental clinics. In the early 2000s Gweru Adventist Dental Clinic became the favorite clinic of the city populace, appreciated for its spacious and scenic location, clean and excellent dental services, and hospitable staff. (Today, ten dental clinics operate in Gweru.)⁴

Gweru Adventist Dental Clinic's operations progressed steadily, serving a large portion of the dental patients of the city. In 2000 the clinic served 1,500 patients, of which eighty percent were white, ten percent indigenous, and ten percent from foreign minority groups.⁵

In 2001, Dr. and Mrs. Tabaranza left for Kenya, and Dr. Chris Tivamirire⁶ joined the clinic, with Laura Khan as the receptionist, and June Richard as the second dental assistant. In 2003 Loveness Moyo left for Bulawayo and June Richard left for the United Kingdom. Furthermore, Laura Khan's family was transferred to East Zimbabwe Conference. Then, Alice Lela was appointed dental assistant and Mrs. Joven employed as the receptionist.

Sibongile Gora also joined the clinic staff as janitor.

In 2005, Dr. Chris Tivamirire and Mrs. Joven left, and Dr. Arimando Blanch became the new dentist. Olivia Green also joined the team in 2007 as a receptionist, serving until October 2011.

Temporal Closure

Due to economic and staffing challenges, the clinic closed from July 2012 to September 2018, when renovations on the building were started.⁷ This was after the realignment of Zimbabwe Union Conference into three union conferences. The six-year-long closure period rendered the building and most of the equipment unusable. Repairs started with the leaking roof and broken ceilings, followed by tiling the floors, repairing broken walls, painting, and refurbishing the fittings and equipment, including the dental chair. New landscaping and sign posting was done to enhance the exterior appearance of the facility. The clinic resumed operations on October 1, 2018, with Dr. Chris Tivamirire, who had returned to work as a part-time dentist and administrator of the institution.⁸

In November 2021, after creating space for medical services and meeting the requirements of the Local Health Council and those of the governing body, the Health Professionals Association, the institution was issued an operating certificate for its multiple health services. Now named Gweru Adventist Health Practice, the clinic engaged Dr. Tendai Chandaengerwa as a part-time physician.

Outreach Services

In 2001, most outreach activities were funded by AUS through the efforts of Dr. Dave Wilkinson. Programs conducted through its outreach services included Stop Smoking seminars, free dental clinics services (oral examinations and consultations, plus medicines), health lectures, and vegetarian cooking demonstrations. Patient visits soared thanks to free clinics.

Gweru Adventist Health Practice operates an Adventist Lending Library, offering Ellen White books, theology and health titles, church magazines, pamphlets, videos on Adventist doctrines, and a health-family lecture series on audio cassettes. Great appreciation was given to AOS for donating these important library resources.

As of 2022, the clinic has four contract workers: a part-time medical doctor, part-time dental surgeon, a dental assistant who also serves as the receptionist, and a general hand who takes care of cleaning work. The clinic is still in its early stages of its resuscitated operations.

The dental services so far serve an average of six patients per week. During the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, patient numbers increased to an average of 12 patients per week.⁹

Outlook

Adjacent to the clinic, a Seventh-day Adventist hospital is under construction, having stalled due to the nation's severe economic challenges.¹⁰ Construction is set to be completed by the end of 2022. It is hoped that the hospital will increase the visibility of the dental practice and enhance the church's mission impact, assisting in outreach to minority population groups that frequent the dental facility.

List of Leaders

W. Tabaranza (1997-2001); C. Tivamirire (2001-2005); A. Blanch (2005-July 2012); Temporarily Closed (2012-2018); C. Tivamirire (2018-Present)

SOURCES

<https://midlandsmedicalnews.wordpress.com/dentists/>

Seventh-day Adventist Church (Gweru, Zimbabwe). Minutes of the Gweru Adventist Dental Practice Management Board meeting of March 4, 2020, and September 8, 2020.

Seventh-day Adventist Church (Gweru, Zimbabwe). Minutes of the Zimbabwe Central Union Conference ADCOM meeting, July 17, 2018.

Seventh-day Adventist Church (Bulawayo, Zimbabwe). Minutes of the Zimbabwe Union Conference Executive Committee meetings, various dates.

Tabaranza, W. Yearly Report of the Gweru Adventist Dental Practice. Archives File.

NOTES

1. Seventh-day Adventist Church (Bulawayo, Zimbabwe). Minutes of the Zimbabwe Union Conference Executive Committee meetings of various dates.
2. Gedion Lela, interview by author, Gweru, Zimbabwe, February 4, 2022.
3. <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/cities/zimbabwe>
4. <https://midlandsmedicalnews.wordpress.com/dentists/>
5. W. Tabaranza, Yearly Report, Gweru Adventist Dental Practice. Archives File.
6. Chris Tivamirire. Interview by author, Gweru, Zimbabwe, May 9, 2022.

7. Seventh-day Adventist Church (Gweru, Zimbabwe). Minutes of the Zimbabwe Central Union Conference ADCOM meeting of July 17, 2018.
 8. Ibid.
 9. Gweru Adventist Health Practice (Gweru, Zimbabwe). Minutes of the Gweru Adventist Dental Practice Management Board meeting of September 8, 2020.
 10. C. Tivamirire, interview by author, Gweru, Zimbabwe, May 9, 2022.
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