

Adventist Dental and Medical Center

PAUL SEMBA

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Adventist Dental and Medical Center (formerly Arusha Adventist Dental and Medical Centre) was founded by Tanzania Union in about 1970.¹ It is situated at the foot of Njiro Hill on the outskirts of Arusha City, Tanzania.

Founding

Arusha Adventist Dental and Medical Centre was a product of Adventist teachings and mission. Before Tanzania Union headquarters were transferred to Njiro Hill, Arusha, Arusha Adventist Dental and Medical Centre operated from downtown in rented premises at Arusha Cooperative Union building on Uhuru Road. Later a specific place was allocated to it at a more spacious area next to the Tanzania Union headquarters. In those early days, Arusha Adventist Dental and Medical Centre was the only center that provided health services apart from the Mount Meru Hospital which is a government institution.²

The idea of founding Arusha Adventist Dental and Medical Centre was initially an interest of Pr. L. C. Robinson, president Tanzania Union Mission. But it was Dr. Theodore S. Flaiz who started the Dental practice in 1970³ When he left, he was replaced by Dr. A. Mottely, an African American with Caribbean origin. At first Arusha Adventist Dental and Medical Centre provided dental and medical care for church workers and members. As its services became known, more people came seeking for various kinds of treatment. Arusha Adventist Dental and Medical Centre operated under the Health Medical Services Department of Tanzania Union, which provided funds for the clinic.⁴

History

When Dr. A. Motley left in 1986, the clinic was closed and remained closed until the year 1993, except when Dr. Ezekiel Midamba, a Tanzanian who had trained in the Philippines, served for a few months before leaving for Zambia. In 1993, Dr. Tekle H. Asmeron, an Eritrean originally, joined the medical center as director. In the same year, the clinic changed its name from Arusha Medical and Dental Clinic to the current name of Adventist Dental and Medical Center. Dr. Tekle faced a challenge of lack of equipment for effective service delivery. He then embarked on soliciting the needed equipment from foreign agencies and succeeded. With the help he received, he expanded and improved clinical services. Together with the support staff, he conducted a four-year outreach program using a mobile dental unit. Through this project, many people came to know about the Adventist

Church and its beliefs. Within a few years the medical center became a self-supporting institution⁵

To expand its medical services, the Adventist Dental and Medical Center, through Tanzania Union, received a loan from East-Central African Division that enabled them to renew the plumbing and electrical system, do landscaping, pave a parking lot, increase the number of skilled staff, employ one additional physician and an accountant, and purchase a complete medical laboratory equipment and the X-ray and ultrasound machines⁶. With the improved service, the Adventist Dental and Medical Center signed contracts with insurance companies and could treat their patients on credit.⁷

In 2003, Adecto Wat'ogwang joined the Adventist Dental and Medical Center so that there were 2 dental surgeons, 2 clinical officers, a dental assistant and other staff to a total of 12. Even though the number had increased, the Center managed to sustain its staff with no subsidy from the union for a period of five years (1999-2003).⁸

Impact and Prospects

The patients at the Adventist Dental and Medical Center are not only treated for medical ailments, but are educated about physical and spiritual health through the study of "Maisha Bora" (Good Life) and "Biblia Yasema" (Bible Speaks). The staff offers Christian service to the community. Every morning, the staff conducts a short devotion with their patients. Many people like the service which the staff of the center provides and many have joined the church.⁹

The Adventist Dental and Medical Center provides medical and dental health care for an average of 60 patients per day.¹⁰ It is considered to be one of the best dental clinics in Tanzania.¹¹

Some of the challenges facing the Adventist Dental and Medical Center are lack of funds to acquire means of transportation that would facilitate visitation to all schools in the region with regular outreach programs. Needed also is a maternity wing to the current building and renovating the down-town branch clinic.¹²

Medical Directors

Dr. Flaiz (c. 1970-unknown date); Dr. A. Mottely (unknown date-1986); Dr. Tekle H. Asmeron (1993-2013); Dr. Rachel Mgeni (2013-2016); Dr. Yonazi M. Reuben (2017-current).

SOURCES

Okeyo, Elisha Ago. *Kanisa Safarini Tanzania: Historia ya Kanisa 1903-2013*. Morogoro: Tanzania Adventist Press, 2014.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971.

NOTES

1. "Institutions: Afro-Mideast Division," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971), 107.
2. Elisha Ago Okeyo, retired pastor and executive secretary of Tanzania Union (1976-1991), interview with the author, Arusha, August 21, 2018.
3. "Institutions: Afro-Mideast Division."
4. Elisha Ago Okeyo, retired pastor and executive secretary of Tanzania Union (1976-1991), interview with the author, Arusha, August 21, 2018.
5. Ibid.
6. Tekle H. Asmeron, "Report of Arusha Adventist Dental and Medical Centre (AADC)," Tanzania Union Session, Arusha, 2005.
7. Ibid.
8. 10 Elisha Ago Okeyo, *Kanisa Safarini Tanzania: Historia ya Kanisa 1903-2013* (Morogoro: Tanzania Adventist Press 2014), 185.
9. Ibid.
10. Yonazi M. Reuben, AADC medical director, interview with the author, Arusha, August 21, 2018.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.

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