



# NEWSLETTER

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Look out for our next issue in **OCTOBER**

## AUGUST 2005

### SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION (STI) STUDY COMPLETES FIRST PHASE

WINGS' study on the prevalence of Sexually Transmitted Infections, begun in May, has just finished with the testing of 1,160 volunteer women. The data will now be analyzed and we will have the final evaluation by the end of the year.

We have been working within eight municipalities of the Department of Chimaltenango. Although most received an impressive turnout, in others the response was paltry, due in part to the clinics being more isolated (both geographically and culturally). Where there

was a high turn out, much credit goes to our new Youth Multipliers, who did an outstanding job of promoting this free service. This has been an

unexpected side benefit of our youth program.

The aim of the STI Study is to get accurate data on the percentage of women, among the 1,160 tested, that are infected by certain STIs; initial results show a prevalence that is not immediately alarming. Although results still need to be analyzed, we know the following infections were found: Syphilis 6-10, Chlamydia 9, Trichomonas 16, Gonorrhea 5-10, and just one HIV+ patient. It is useful to know that prevalence rates in this area are lower than anticipated, in order to guide future endeavors.

Meira Neggaz, WINGS' Program Director explains "All the



Women listening to a health talk prior to testing

ingredients are there for an epidemic: infidelity, men who migrate for work, prostitution, the fact that it's acceptable for men to have more than one partner, low use of condoms, etc. WINGS is all about education and prevention, as they can help stem this potential epidemic. Our educational efforts will focus on abstinence, being faithful, and the use of condoms."

The response from the women attending the study has been truly heart-warming, with overwhelming gratitude for the opportunity to receive this kind of medical attention, normally so prohibitively expensive.

Before every test, women were given counseling on STIs and family planning, and we received informed consent from them. All women with positive diagnoses were given further counseling and treatment. These lengthy, private counseling sessions have stimulated considerable interest in family planning, so WINGS is now going to be busier than ever.



Women listening to a talk about family planning and pap smears



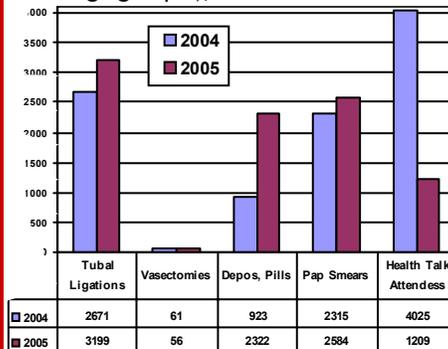
Patient having a blood test

### SIX-MONTH STATISTICS 2005

WINGS has had a productive and encouraging first six months of 2005. As the graph indicates, besides vasectomies (always a challenging topic), all areas of

family planning have increased. In our educational talks, we continue to try to convince couples of the desirability of vasectomies and to dispel myths (such as a man will become homosexual after a vasectomy), but it is a slow process.

The significant decrease in Health Talk attendance is due to WINGS' Coordinators being directly involved with the STI study (May-July) and so they have been unable to give their usual high number of talks.



January - June comparison between 2004 and 2005

## YOUTH WINGS MULTIPLIERS MAKING AN IMPACT

The 60 Youth WINGS Multipliers who graduated in February have undertaken their new roles with impressive dedication. Working in six municipalities in the Department of Chimaltenango, they have reached an estimated 2,102 adults and youth since May. They have also been working alongside WINGS representatives to promote the STI Study.

The Multipliers have also been working with other groups. In San Martin Jilotepeque, on June 30, they joined forces with another non-profit organization called Proyecto Payaso (Clown Project), which works in rural areas informing Guatemalans about



Youth WINGS with Proyecto Payaso clowns

how HIV/AIDS is transmitted and how it can be avoided. This is communicated through street theater; dressed as clowns, they are better able to break down the usual reticence and barriers, which more conventional methods fail to do.

It was an extremely successful day, with an audience of 350, of

whom 86 were adolescents. Roberto Morales, Coordinator for Proyecto Payaso, comments, "It was a great experience to work with WINGS, which prepared everything with great dedication. The day was definitely a success, due to the excellent coordination by Pilar Marroquin, Youth WINGS Coordinator, and the Youth WINGS group. The participants were very receptive and appeared to enjoy the activities. We expect to continue working with WINGS in the future."

Youth WINGS will be continuing its vital work, and plans are afoot to expand into additional areas, and train more Multipliers.



Left to right: Ashley Gamble, Rebecca Braun and Cara Mae Woolledge

### SUMMER INTERN ANGELS

WINGS is literally bursting with activity at the moment. The summer months have brought an influx of interns and volunteers – the largest we've had so far.

We have recently expanded our small Antigua office from one

room to three, and none too soon, as there are four interns currently working with us, plus a variety of volunteers who are helping with data entry and photocopying (needed for the STI study). WINGS and all our beneficiaries are most grateful for their hard work.

Angie Robertson (USC), who just left, and her replacement Grace Lee (UCLA), together with our Youth Coordinator, Pilar Marroquin, are creating standards for the Youth WINGS program and producing a manual for the Multipliers. Rebecca Braun (UC Berkeley) and Cara Mae Woolledge (UCLA) are doing similar work for the Family Planning and Cervical Cancer Programs, working with Health

Coordinators Luis Ordonez and Lourdes Tojin. Ashley Gamble (UCSD) has been diligently working on a family planning barrier analysis, since January. Among our trusty volunteers have been: Nati Tojin, Peggy Bubeck, Epifania Pantaleo and Laura Wentzel.

In fact, WINGS has generated so much additional work that we have just employed two new full-time Health Coordinators: Carmen Lopez and Carmen Roquel, who started August 1st. This is great proof that WINGS is going from strength to strength, and as a result of the continued dedication of its donors and increasing grant assistance, we can now make a difference to even more Guatemalan families.



### FACES OF WINGS

MARGARITA (42) and her daughter EVERILDA (20), recently attended a WINGS talk on family planning and contraception. Doña Margarita was uncomfortable with the subject matter to start with, but by the end she was discussing it quite openly with her daughter. (Margarita does not speak Spanish, and her daughter was having to translate into Ceqchiquel Mayan for her.)

Everilda explained her mother's appreciation, and that she advised Everilda to have a tubal ligation, as she already has two children and can't afford more. Her husband comes home every two weeks, so she would be able to have an operation and time to recover without him finding out. (Machismo is very strong in Guatemala, and many women face opposition from their husbands to using a contraceptive method.) Doña

Margarita was extremely grateful that her daughter is now able to choose to have fewer children than she did. Everilda had her operation in March.

MARIA ELENA (30) was married at 15 and now has six children (14,11,9,6,3 & 1). After her third child she decided she didn't want any more, so she spoke to her husband, but unfortunately her request was met by abuse, both physical and verbal. She had no choice but to continue having children, even though she dreamed about how much better her life would be if she didn't get pregnant again.

In February, WINGS visited her community to give talks on family planning. Elena asked for help and two months later she received a tubal ligation. Now Elena is telling her neighbors about WINGS, so we are going to provide other women from her community with information.



*"It was a great experience to work with WINGS, which prepared everything with great dedication."*

Roberto Morales  
Coordinator, Proyecto Payaso



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N.B. Check out our regular webpage news

WINGS (Women's International Network for Guatemalan Solutions) is a non-profit organization  
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