

Shi Ba Li Village Clinic - Dr. Han Hongxia

Through this project, our partner, the Amity Foundation, is reaching out with a loving and helping hand to those in need, while simultaneously fulfilling another of its goals, that of making the presence and the caring of Chinese Christians for all people more widely known in Chinese society by working with people of many different backgrounds to bring concrete expressions of love that touch the deepest needs of others in tangible ways that make a difference in their lives. Through our help in the building of the village clinics and through our provision of some needed medicines, we American Baptists have also become a part of this ministry of love-in-action. Here is the story of Shi Ba Li Village and of village doctor, Dr. Han (Han Hongxia).

Shi Ba Li Village is located in Sha Tang Township in Long De County toward the southern end of the Ningxia Autonomous Region of China. The village extends from the flats up into the hills. The one thousand seven hundred villagers belong to 300 families and there are a little over three hundred children fifteen years of age and under.



A field beside the clinic



Village path with homes on the right



Haystacks, village fields and hills in the distance

Dr. Han, a 37-year-old villager and farmer, graduated from Amity's one-and-a-half-year village doctor training program in 2003. Before that, this large village had one male doctor whose practice was at the opposite and far end of the village. Official regulations call for each village to have two doctors. Now, Shi Ba Li counts itself among the few fortunate villages meeting this goal. As these two doctors share the load, it is much easier for villagers to receive treatment when they need it. Moreover, women can now choose to go to a woman doctor if they would like.

Dr. Han, her husband and their three children between the ages of seven and ten live in the hills. In the past, either their home or her parent's home was the only place she had to see her patients. It was definitely not private, not very convenient and not so sanitary for some medical procedures.

With \$1000 in One Great Hour of Sharing funds contributed by American Baptists and sent through the Amity Foundation added to funds from her farm work along with help from relatives and friends, Dr. Han has been able to build a small clinic according to the specifications of Amity and the requirements of the Provincial Health Bureau.¹ The clinic has three rooms—a reception room, an examination and treatment room, and another room with a bed for patients who might need to stay at the clinic overnight.





Hanging the new Shi Ba Li Amity Village Clinic sign



Judy gives Dr. Han our contribution to the building of the clinic



Judy learns from Dr. Han about her village and her work as village doctor

The Shi Ba Li villagers are Han Chinese, which is the majority ethnic group in China and the people we usually think of as being Chinese. Relatively poor farmers, they have an average yearly per capita income of about 500 – 600 *yuan Renminbi* (approximately \$62.50 - \$75). Their main crops include wheat, potatoes, two different of kinds of beans, and benne (a type of sesame grown in this area and used to make edible cooking oil. The plots of land allotted to each person or to each family are relatively small and farming is generally done by hand. Some families may also raise two or three goats or sheep or one or two head of cattle.



As we reached her parents' home, Dr. Han's father arrived from the fields with wheelbarrow in hand.

The number of patients Dr. Han sees each week depends a lot on the season. More become ill and seek the doctor's advice in the winter and spring than in the summer and fall. During the winter, for example, she may see as many as 70 patients per week, while in the summer the average would be a little less than half of that. The main conditions she treats include colds and flu, other respiratory illnesses, fevers, and digestive problems. She helps village women protect their health and prevent disease, and she provides prenatal care and advice for pregnant women.

If a patient who has seen the doctor in the township or the county hospital for a more serious illness has a prescription for IVs or injections, Dr Han gives the IVs or the injections in the village clinic or even in the patients' homes, making it much more convenient for the villagers to receive their prescribed treatments in a timely manner.

Every year, Dr. Han also helps to provide preventative medical care for the villagers. She works together with the doctor at the other end of the village to provide all of the appropriate vaccinations for the children. She tells the villagers about personal health and hygiene issues, about the need for and the methods of water purification, and other disease prevention measures helpful to them. Generally she does this on a one-to-one bases as they come to see her for various medical problems.

Many times patients who come to see the doctor cannot pay for the small cost of the medicine they need, let alone any fee for the doctor. In this case, they usually sign some kind of I.O.U. These patients will always try to pay the doctor back gradually and will do their best to clear their debt at harvest time. Nonetheless, there are always some who are so poor that they cannot pay back what they owe and the doctor continues to pay for their treatment out of her own pocket even though the doctor and her family are also quite poor. This is true of Dr. Han, as it is of other village doctors as well. To help mitigate this problem and enable village doctors to continue to serving the poorest of the poor in their villages and surrounding areas

without totally draining their own resources dry, American Baptists, with the help of the Amity Foundation and the Ningxia Provincial Health and Sanitation Office have started to provide a supply of commonly needed medicines that these village doctors can use when treating those who cannot afford to pay for their care. ABWM is currently raising White Cross funds to help with this project.



Dr Yang (local Amity staff overseeing this project) tells Dr. Han about our gift of medicine for use in treating patients who cannot pay.

After just being in the new clinic for five days, Dr. Han said that it is now much more convenient for her and for her patients. She loves being at the clinic. Now her patients don't have to go looking for her in the fields, and they have a better facility in which to see the doctor. She thinks that more villagers may now come to see her when they first become ill, rather than waiting and allowing their conditions to worsen. This will mean she can treat them early and they can recover sooner.

Thanks again for your part in this ministry of "love in action" in Shi Ba Li Village and in nine other villages, also in the southern part of the Ningxia Autonomous Region in China.

¹ ABC International Ministries is interested in helping other similar villages with their medical needs in the same way. The \$1000 reflects what was needed for the construction and provide basic equipment for each clinic in 2004. As costs have been rising, any future clinics built will need \$1400 for construction and basic equipment.