

Ship Report

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“Extreme dentistry” takes place in prison

Throw the word “extreme” in front of almost anything, and you’ve got yourself a primetime television hit. The number of spectators for Extreme Sports is approaching that of mainstream sports. *Extreme Makeover* and *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* are two of America’s most-watched television programs. There’s even a sport titled *Extreme Ironing*, in which competitors iron clothing in remote locations.

But a Mercy Ships dental team won’t be appearing on ESPN or ABC for their recent adventures in “extreme dentistry,” the term aptly used for work in areas without power for lights or equipment. Places like Monrovia Central Prison.

Sporting head lamps and forceps, the four dentists and four dental assistants spent the day extracting decayed and broken teeth for nearly 60 inmates selected by the prison’s nurse as the worst cases among the 365 prisoners.

“If we run into a tough situation we have no drill to do something surgically, so we’re just relying on somewhat primitive means to get the teeth out,” explained Dr. Keith Chapman.

Curious inmates watched through windows as fellow prisoners progressed through examination, waiting, numbing, more waiting, and finally treatment. Prisoners appreciated the care and

enjoyed the personal attention, many openly sharing their stories and seeking spiritual advice from available crew.

One young man, wearing a white tank top and blue jeans cut off below the knee, sat down at Dr. Andy Rossiter’s chair. He sat quietly in the chair with perfect posture. Dr. Rossiter introduced himself, and the young man introduced himself as Darus. Darus explained he had suffered with “pain of the mouth” for nearly two years.

After a brief prayer with Darus, Dr. Rossiter located one broken tooth and a wisdom tooth with a “huge hole” in it. The broken tooth, which was accompanied by an abscess or granuloma, came out quickly. The “number eight tooth” was pulled, and Dr. Rossiter announced, “It’s a boy!”

Darus moved to the next station, where a translator explained how to care for his sore mouth and gave him Ibuprofen for the pain. He then had time to relax and speak with another Mercy Ships crew member, Janette Thomas as he waited to be escorted back to his cell.

“Today was a perfect example of how important developing trust is,” said Dr. Chapman. *“Last year the patients stopped coming in the early afternoon, because the morning patients began to complain about pain as the pain medication wore off. Today, we’ve had a steady stream of guys all day.”*

