



American International Health Alliance  
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# AIHA Success Story

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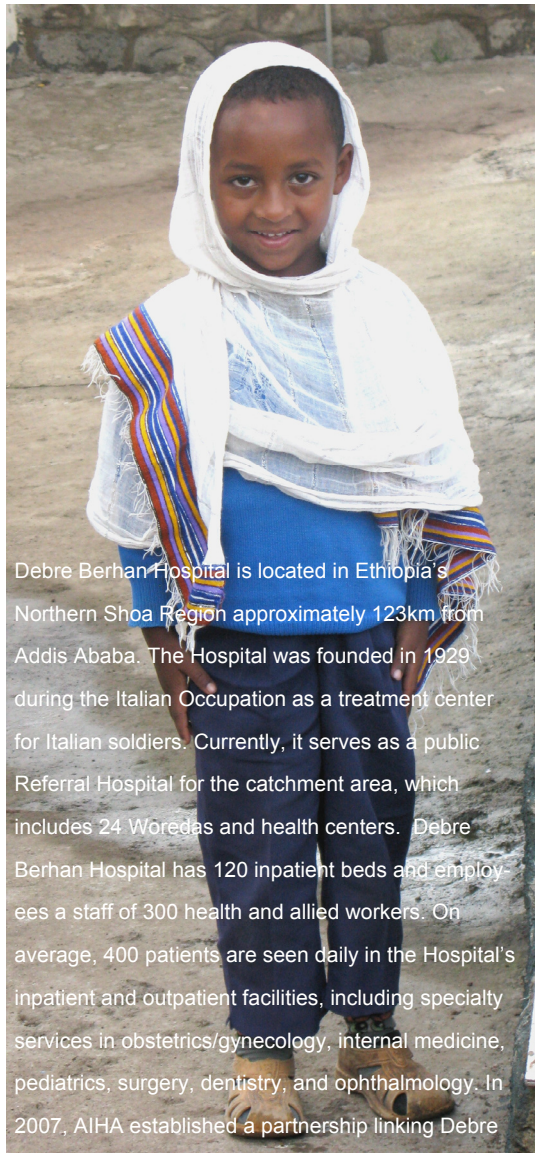
## PARTNERSHIP QUICK FACTS

- Ethiopian Partner:  
Debre Berhan Hospital
- US Partner:  
Elmhurst Hospital Center
- Year Established: 2007

## CONTACT US

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## Debre Berhan Hospital Partnership with Elmhurst Medical Center



Debre Berhan Hospital is located in Ethiopia's Northern Shoa Region approximately 123km from Addis Ababa. The Hospital was founded in 1929 during the Italian Occupation as a treatment center for Italian soldiers. Currently, it serves as a public Referral Hospital for the catchment area, which includes 24 Woredas and health centers. Debre Berhan Hospital has 120 inpatient beds and employs a staff of 300 health and allied workers. On average, 400 patients are seen daily in the Hospital's inpatient and outpatient facilities, including specialty services in obstetrics/gynecology, internal medicine, pediatrics, surgery, dentistry, and ophthalmology. In 2007, AIHA established a partnership linking Debre

Berhan Hospital with Elmhurst Hospital Center in New York City through its HIV/AIDS Twinning Center. With support from the US President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and CDC/Ethiopia, partners are collaborating to improve hospital services — including treatment, care, and psycho-social support — for PLWH in Debre Berhan's catchment area. They have also working to increase patient involvement as a means to improve quality of care and better ensure adherence to ARV treatment.

*Key objectives of AIHA's Hospital-to-Hospital Partnership in Debre Berhan are to strengthen the human and organizational capacity to provide high quality care and support services, including ART, to PLWH by:*

- *Enhancing medical and psychosocial care for PLWH to prevent complications and improve quality of life*
- *Strengthening hospital services related to HIV/AIDS care at Debre Berhan*
- *Increasing patient involvement as a way of improving quality of care*
- *Enhancing professional knowledge and training opportunities for Debre Berhan staff*

The Twinning Center's partnership program — in particular the professional exchanges — has had a tremendous impact on Debre Berhan's operations. Through exposure to a model hospital and dedicated clinical mentors, Debre Berhan's staff experienced first-hand a different level of care that could be delivered at their own facility. They have successfully brought back the spirit of these encounters, transferring them into practice and raising the bar for both patient care and organizational management. The impact of these changes are reflected in the Hospital's marked improvements in autonomy, clinical care, quality improvement, and continuing medical education.

In the past, for example, patients visited the Hospital's ART Clinic only for medication refills. Appointments did not afford patients much interaction with care providers and a number of individuals were lost to follow up.



Elmhurst nurse Jackie Stith shares a letter with a Debre Berhan patient who is participating in a pen pal program among HIV patients at both hospitals. Patients share their experiences with treatment and support one another as a means of improving adherence to treatment.



US partner Dr. Ronni Lieberman, Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, mentors a Debre Berhan clinician on ophthalmological care for PLWH during a professional exchange.

Through the partnership, Debre Berhan staff have standardized patient visits based on what they learned from their counterparts at Elmhurst. Now visits to the ART Clinic include full clinical assessments as well as psychosocial investigations and nutritional and support system inquiries. The result has been fewer patients dropping out of treatment.

The partnership has also resulted in the Hospital upgrading its diagnostic testing capacity, which is now in line with CDC guidelines for Referral Hospitals that treat PLWH. Hematology and HIV testing now meets international quality standards. Additionally, there have been tremendous improvements in early detection of cervical cancer — the most prevalent form of cancer among Ethiopian women — thanks to Elmhurst's donation of a colposcope for the evaluation of cervical abnormalities, along with targeted training for Debre Berhan lab technicians, who participated in a professional exchange to Elmhurst in June 2011 to learn how to perform pap smears.

Because Debre Berhan is a regional Referral Hospital, partners have worked to strengthen its capacity to care for trauma patients, supporting the construction of a new Emergency Room designed meet growing demands and improve workflow. The partnership has also supported the establishment of an onsite bioengineering facility where equipment can be efficiently repaired rather than left inoperable for long periods or even discarded. Staffed by two engineers, this facility is expected to reduce overall hospital costs in new equipment acquisitions, as well as time lost due to operational status of key equipment. The engineers will also assist Alem Ketema and Mehal Meda hospitals with their equipment repair needs.

In accordance with the Federal Ministry of Health's quality improvement guidelines, partners worked together to establish a Quality Improvement Team comprised of Debre Berhan's Chief Executive Officer and the heads of all departments. Members of the team now review policies, events, and protocol every 15 days. After two exchanges with Elmhurst Hospital, Debre Berhan became Ethiopia's first hospital to develop its own Infection Prevention Program and accompanying protocols.

Based on what they experienced at Elmhurst, Debre Berhan has restructured the role of nurses in an effort to improve quality of care. Nursing leaders from Elmhurst's Outpatient Infectious Diseases Department helped their Debre Berhan counterparts become more effective in their own right through mentoring, as well as technical support to better define nursing roles and responsibilities. When the partnership was established, Debre Berhan's nurses worked either 10-hour or 14-hour shifts. Suspecting that this had a negative impact on care, the nurses worked with the Hospital's leadership to transition to a standard 8-hour shift, which has increased efficiency and decreased spending due to staff overtime.

Thanks to the partnership, Debre Berhan has initiated monthly evaluations of complicated, multidisciplinary cases with adverse outcomes to open a dialogue that will help improve systemic operations. In addition, staff have automated Debre Berhan's pharmacy, using computer inventories to better inform timely acquisition of medications. Finally, partners established a new Learning Resource Center to provide medical staff access to evidence-based medical resources. This center was funded in part by an Elmhurst patient.

## AIHA/Ethiopia

The HIV/AIDS Twinning Center

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