

The clinical team for the 2017 OMPACO trip was made up of Amanda Martinage OTR/L, M.Ed (occupational therapist and President of OMPACO), Martha Collins M.D., M.P.H. (Former president of OMPACO), Nilofer Naqvi Ph.D. (Psychologist), Jill Morris MS.Ed (Special education teacher) and Deborah Arin MS, CCC-SLP (Speech and language therapist). The OMPACO team gathered in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, on the weekend of June 24, 2017. They immediately travelled to Mwanza for a 3-day training session that began on June 27. Upon their arrival in Mwanza, the team completed 2, hour long lectures regarding Autism to a group of 80 representatives from the Ministry of Education. This was a fantastic opportunity to reach out to a greater number of educators including administrators and to spread the word about the Autism awareness and education trainings presented by OMPACO.

For the remainder of the three days in Mwanza, the team delivered lectures to special education teachers from various districts. Topics covered included: How to diagnosis Autism Spectrum Disorders, dispelling common myths, teaching, communication, behavior management strategies and IEP development. Overall the teachers were very enthusiastic, friendly, welcoming and animated.

The team then traveled to east to Dareda. They toured Dareda Hospital to view dental equipment received in 2016 donated by OMPACO. The team learned of issues that prevented its use as well as other much need equipment that was broken. OMPACO returned to with a list of needs to be addressed. Before departing, the team left a suitcase worth of learning materials for the Patrick Winter Primary School.

Continuing their travel, the team arrived in Arusha and stayed in the beautiful compound belonging to the Sisters of Mercy. A 2-day training in Arusha focused on using the Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLBS) curriculum to assess and create goals/objectives to monitor student progress. From there activities were discussed to target the learning objectives. The overwhelming majority of teachers had attended previous OMPACO trainings and had basic background knowledge on Autism etiology, symptoms and basic intervention strategies. The workshop was met with great reviews from the teachers who were grateful to have been taught how to use and apply a curriculum tool in their classrooms. The team left a copy of the ABLBS assessment guide (generously donated by Behavior Analysts, Inc) and assessment supplies to support the use of the ABLBS.

After a long awaited visit to the Masi Market in Arusha to purchase fund raising trinkets, the team again traveled back to Dar Es Salaam. Unfortunately a similar training on the ABLBS to be held in Dar es Salaam had to be cancelled. More shopping occurred in the place of the training! Two suitcases of learning materials were left with a trusted teacher to be distributed to local schools.

During the team's time in Tanzania, Nilofer and Amanda met with administrators in Mwanza and Arusha to introduce the idea of a mobile phone training. The initiative was well received and a letter of support was written. Further efforts to make this exciting project a reality will occur!