

ལྷོ་པོ་སྐུ་སྐུ་དགོ་རྩ་ཚོགས་པ།
Dolpo Tulku Charitable Foundation

Trust Regd. Number Trust 741

February, 2024

REPORT ON 15th FREE WINTER CLINIC

Background:

Healthcare Dolpo Tulku Charitable Foundation (DTCF) was established in 2007 and received recognition as a charitable foundation by the Nepalese government in January 2010. The organization implements the projects of **Dolpo Tulku Rinpoche** and **Khenpo Pema Dorje Rinpoche**. Donations collected throughout the world are forwarded to the Foundation and distributed from there for different projects. In light of their role as spiritual leaders, people frequently approach Dolpo Tulku Rinpoche and Khenpo Pema Dorje Rinpoche directly to express their needs. For a project to be accepted by the DTCF, someone from the community must take on the responsibility of the project, a plan for its implementation and a cost estimate must be provided.



At present, the foundation primarily focuses on education, health, and cultural and environmental issues. One of the foremost and most significant aspects of the foundation's health project is the Free Winter Clinic, which is the 15th Free Winter Clinic being offered in 2024. Prior to 2012, the clinic consisted solely of one foreign physician and a few supporting staff members in a single room. Now, the clinic has expanded to include three physicians, five local assistants, and a variety of volunteers. It has become a comprehensive healthcare facility offering a wide range of services, including vaccinations, physical exams, and health education. Over 10,000 patients have been treated at the clinic since its inception.

In Nepal, the state of the health service:

Healthcare services in Nepal are provided by both the public and private sectors, though private healthcare providers are primarily active in major cities. Remote areas like Dolpa have small health posts staffed with inexperienced personnel and are understocked with necessary medicines. This has resulted in a higher prevalence of diseases in Nepal compared to other South Asian countries, particularly in rural areas like Dolpa. A large section of the population, especially those in rural poverty, is at risk of infection and mortality from communicable diseases, malnutrition, and other health-related issues. Healthcare services, hygiene, nutrition, and sanitation in Nepal are of inferior quality, particularly in remote regions where the poor face limited access to primary health care due to high costs, low availability, absence of functional government health posts, lack of health education, and conflicting traditional beliefs. Reproductive health care is also limited and disadvantaged for women in remote regions.



Dolpo, known as the hidden land, is one of the most impoverished areas of Nepal due to its geographical isolation and lack of motor-able roads. Access to even basic health services requires significant financial and physical effort for Dolpo inhabitants. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have implemented communication programs to encourage healthy behaviors, but the government's presence remains negligible, even after the execution of local governance. Despite NGOs working on health, education, and living standards, people in Dolpo often have to travel to the capital for advanced medical treatment. Additionally, language barriers, cultural differences, and financial burdens exacerbate the challenges faced by Dolpo residents in receiving standard treatment in Kathmandu.



In an effort to improve the accessibility of health services, the Dolpo Tulku Charitable Foundation has been organizing the Free Winter Clinic (FWC) in collaboration with Stupa Community Hospital since 2012. This report outlines the main achievements and findings during the five weeks of the clinic in Kathmandu. The foundation invites readers to provide feedback for continuous improvement through its Facebook page (www.facebook.com/DolpoTulku) or via email at info@dolpotulku.org

Free Winter Clinic's Objectives:

1. Provide free medical care, with a focus on women, the elderly, and children.
2. Identify common health problems in the community and develop solutions.
3. Raise awareness about fundamental health needs through various programs on topics such as hygiene and others.
4. Encourage the use of locally available food products, discouraging the use of drugs and illicit substances.
5. Provide capacity-building for long-term health improvement, giving communities more control over their health.
6. Offer volunteering opportunities for medical and non-medical personnel to contribute to the community.

Free Winter Clinic 2024:

After intermittent operation due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Free Winter Clinic 2024 successfully conducted a second consecutive year from January 7th to February 8th at the new Stupa Community Hospital building with the financial support of the **Ernst-Rautschka-Stiftung, Germany**. The clinic was staffed with 8 individuals, including one medical officer, two acupuncturists, one Amchi (Tibetan medicine practitioner), three health personnel (nurses and health assistants), and one administrator. The team significantly impacted the marginalized people of Dolpa and neighboring Himalayan regions, especially women, the elderly, and children, through curative treatments and health education programs.



Services provided during the clinic included general consultation, dental services, acupuncture, physiotherapy, reproductive health services, and more. Over the five-week period, 1242 patients of all ages were examined, with 21% attending at least twice, particularly in the acupuncture department. Specialist referrals were made based on medical examinations, and awareness programs covered personal hygiene, menstruation, and nutrition. Special attention was given to identifying and addressing prevalent health issues, such as Hepatitis B, Gastritis, and Tuberculosis. Family planning services were also provided at the clinic, including the insertion and withdrawal of contraceptive implants.

The Free Winter Clinic 2024 Team:

1. Dr. Sameer Poudel (Medical Officer)
2. Anjali Tamang (Acupuncture)
3. Pawan Thapa (Acupuncture)
4. Amchi Dawa Gyalpo Gurung (Tibetan. Medicine)
5. Tsering Wangmo Gurung (Nurse)
6. Pema Bhuti (Nurse)
7. Tsering Deckyi Gurung (Health Assistance)
8. Tsering Palzom Thakali (Administrator)
9. Dr. Krishna (Dental Department)



Achievements of the Free Winter Clinic 2024:

The Free Winter Clinic 2024 witnessed the active participation and positive impact on 1,242 individuals hailing from Dolpa and neighboring regions, including Mugu and Mustang. The success of this endeavor can be attributed to the exceptional dedication of our medical and support team, ensuring the delivery of quality services and medications through our well-equipped mini pharmacy.

The spacious setting offered by the hospital in its newly constructed building significantly contributed to the success of the clinic as well. The availability of ample space streamlined the provision of a comprehensive range of services, consolidating general consultation, Tibetan Medicine, acupuncture, and more, all conveniently located on a single floor. This layout enhanced the efficiency and accessibility of the clinic's offerings.

Free Winter Clinic 2024 extended the following services, with corresponding numbers highlighting the individuals who benefited from each department:

General Consultation:



The consultation service operated four days a week, led by Dr. Sameer Poudel, a medical officer from Stupa Community Hospital who has been associated with the clinic since 2019 and is well-acquainted with the healthcare needs of the Dolpa community. This service encompassed comprehensive general medical examinations, ranging from basic biometric measurements (height, weight, vital signs) to advanced and invasive procedures such as endoscopy and biopsy samples, tailored to individual patient and physician requirements. Throughout the Free Winter Clinic, a total of 702 newly registered patients were seen during general consultation hours, including follow-up cases. Approximately 24% of patients received follow-up assessments during the clinic to gauge the impact of the provided treatment.



Common symptoms and complaints recorded included epigastric pain, abdominal fullness/discomfort, back pain, joint pain, headaches, chest pain, acid reflux, weakness, irregular menstruation, micturition, vaginal candidiasis, tuberculosis (pulmonary, miliary, multi-drug resistant), abdominal and spine issues. In-depth medical examinations led to diagnoses ranging from acute gastritis, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), peptic ulcer disease (PUD), upper respiratory tract infection (URTI), back pain, urinary tract infection (UTI), osteoarthritis (OA), pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), musculoskeletal pain (MSP), chronic rhino-sinusitis, allergic conjunctivitis, anemia, thyroid disorders, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and more. Additionally, doctors identified several cases of hypertension, diabetes, liver diseases (cirrhosis, steatosis, liver cysts suspension, amebic D.D.), and fatty liver.

Physiotherapy & Acupuncture Service:



Acupuncturists Anjali and Pawan provided acupuncture and physiotherapy services three times a week during the Free Winter Clinic, marking their fourth consecutive year in the clinic due to the positive response from patients. The increased days of acupuncture service aimed to address issues related to the back, joints, and knees, requiring multiple follow-ups. After detailed clinical examinations, the team employed various physiotherapeutic methods, including massage, lymphatic drainage, cupping, moxibustion, and acupuncture. The acupuncture department positively impacted 335 individuals aged 20-75, addressing concerns such as arthritis, osteoarthritis, joint tenderness, joint swelling, stiff joints, lower and upper back pain, neck pain, and whiplash. Among them, 130 patients received multiple follow-up services based on the severity of their problems and recovery progress.

Dental Department:



During the Free Winter Clinic 2024, the dental service of the hospital was utilized due to the absence of dental personnel from previous years, who were on maternity leave. Therefore, the portable dental unit owned by the foundation was not able to provide comprehensive dental services such as scaling, extractions, and fillings. In spite of this, 49 Dolpo patients were treated by the dental department for oral hygiene awareness, screening, extraction, fillings (temporary and permanent) and prophylaxis (ultrasonic scaling). Many patients, spanning various age groups, underwent multiple teeth extractions and fillings. In addition to providing dental services, chlorhexidine mouthwash and toothpaste were also distributed to patients in order to enhance their oral hygiene. Patients in the clinic received dental treatment from the hospital's dental unit, allowing them to receive advanced and stable fillings, especially for adults. By utilizing the hospital's dental unit, advanced and stable teeth fillings can be provided for people of all ages, especially for those who are adults. As a result, their oral health needs are effectively addressed, and high-quality dental care is provided to them.

Tibetan Medicine:



Amchi Dawa Gyalpo, a scholarship recipient from the Dolpo Tulku Charitable foundation while he was pursuing a Tibetan medicine degree some years ago, offered comprehensive Tibetan medicine services twice a week throughout the Free Winter Clinic, totaling eight days. His diagnostic services encompassed pulse diagnostics, urine analysis, and treatments such as herbal pills and powders. A total of 141 patients availed themselves of these services during his eight-day clinic visit. The positive response from patients allowed the Free Winter Clinic to suggest and provide treatments from different approaches, harmonizing both traditional and allopathic treatments. Several patients experienced satisfactory outcomes from Tibetan medicines after unsuccessful attempts with conventional medications over an extended period.

Other Services:



Similar to previous clinics, deworming was conducted on the day of awareness and throughout the consultation period, benefiting Dolpopa of all age groups. Reproductive-age women were made aware of female reproductive system hygiene, family planning, and contraceptives. Women received contraceptive implant withdrawal and insertion services every Friday, with 11 insertions and 4 withdrawals during the clinic. Women with specific health concerns were referred to a gynecologist at the hospital as needed. The clinic also organized a separate Liver Function Test program for Hepatitis B-positive patients, as Hepatitis B primarily affects the liver.



Challenges encountered during the Free Winter Clinic 2024:

1. High Attendance Despite Non-Critical Need:

As the services are offered free of charge, the clinic experienced a significant turnout, even from individuals who do not have an immediate need for consultation or medication.

2. Resistance to Behavioral Changes:

There are challenges in persuading individuals to adopt a healthier lifestyle through behavioral changes and habits, rather than relying solely on medications. Many believe medicines to be the preferred solution.

3. Time Constraints for Long-Term Treatments:

Ensuring compliance with treatments that require an extended duration poses difficulties due to the time constraints imposed by the fact that most Dolpo residents stay in Kathmandu for only 3-4 months during the winter.

4. Misconceptions Regarding Diagnostic Processes:

Convincing people to undergo the consultation process and necessary investigations for a better understanding of their health issues is challenging. There exists a preconceived notion that extensive procedures like X-rays and video X-rays are essential.

5. Importance of Health Education:

There are difficulties in conveying the significance of health education over the reliance on treatment and medicine alone.

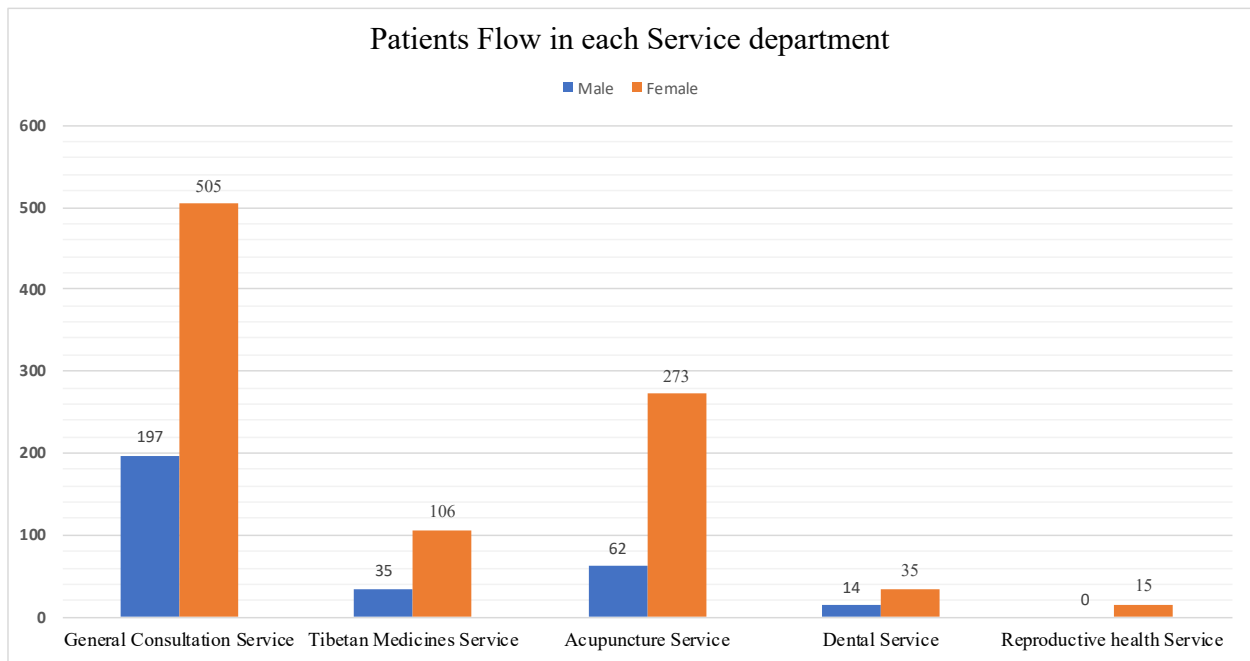
6. Time Constraints in Patient Consultation:

Providing sufficient time to each patient becomes challenging for doctors due to the large number of individuals seeking services at the clinic.

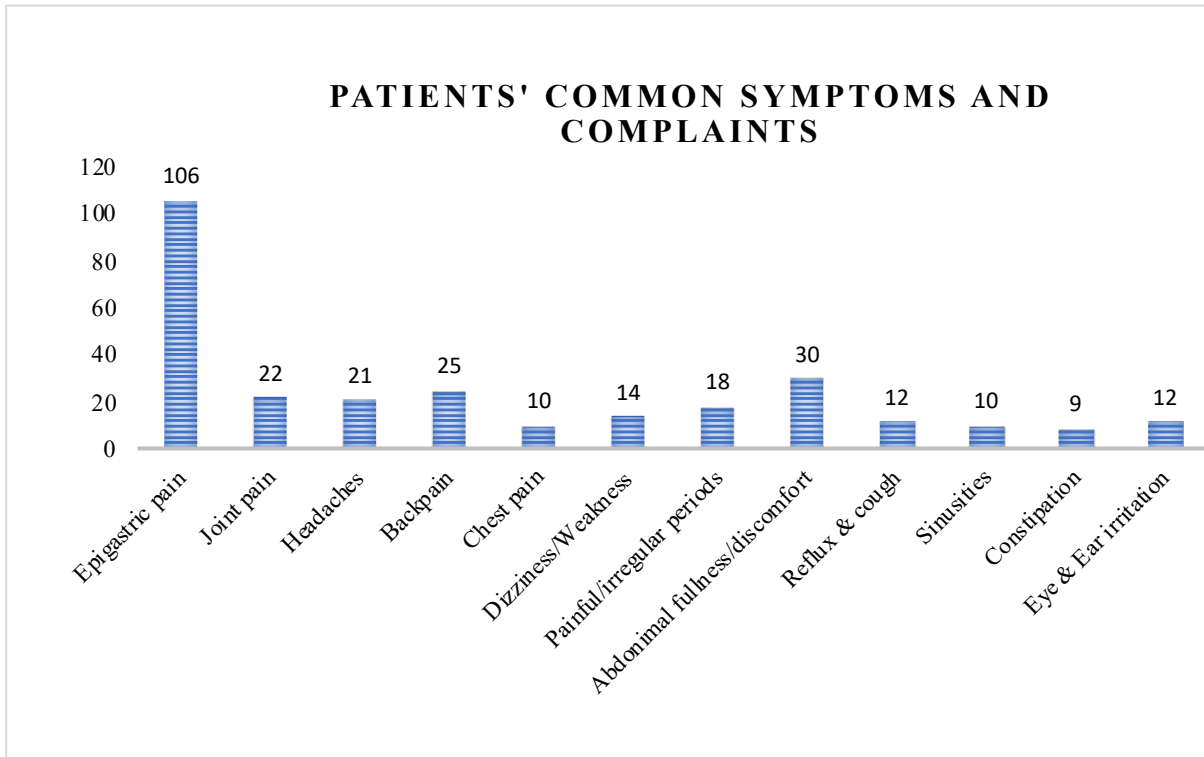
These challenges underscore the complex dynamics involved in providing healthcare services during the Free Winter Clinic and highlight areas that require focused attention for improvement.

Data from the Free Winter Clinic 2024

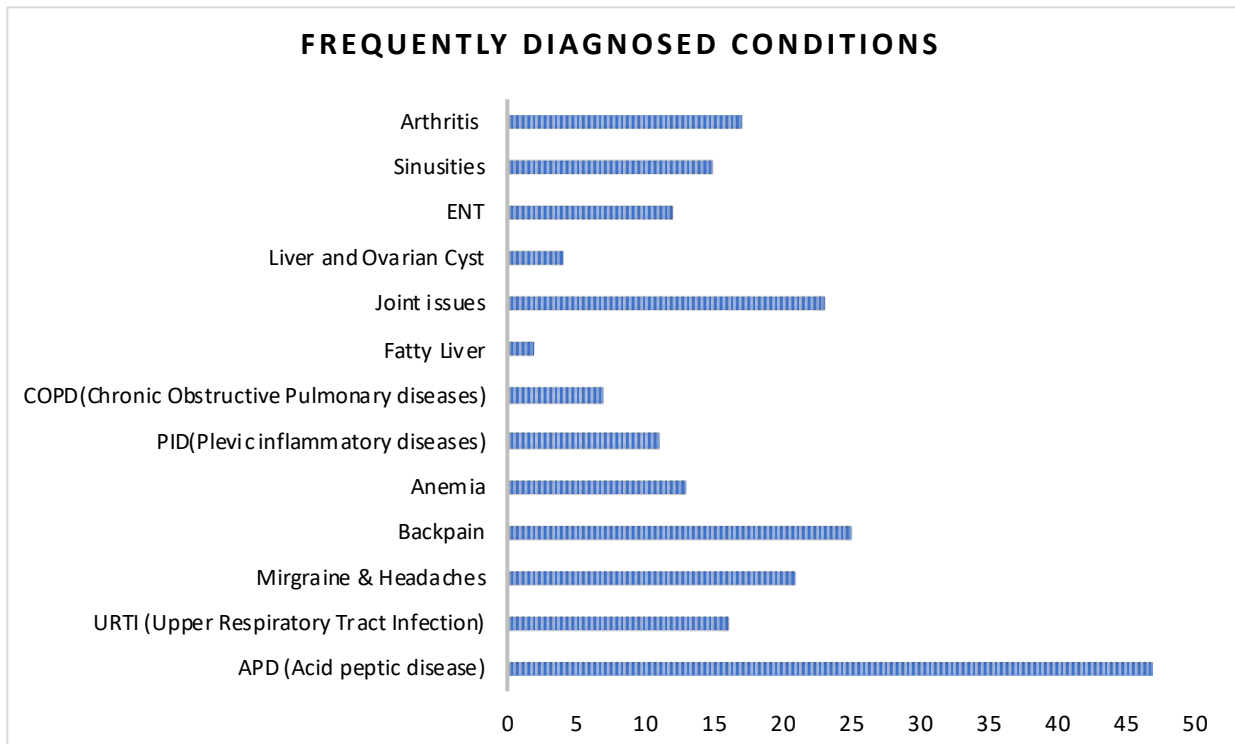
1. Patient Flow in each Service Department



2. Symptoms and complaints of patients attending the Free Winter Clinic 2024



3. Frequently diagnosed conditions in the Free Winter Clinic 2024



Cost Summary of Free Winter Clinic 2024

S.No.	Expenses Head	Amount(NPR)	Amount(EURO)
1	Registration, Consultation & Investigation Expenses	626.597	4.475,69
2	Allopathic Medicines	431.577	3082,69
3	Medical Supplies for Tibetan & Acupuncture Service	163.812	1170,09
4	Dental Care Services	120.000	857,14
5	Salary of Medical Personnel	180.400	1288,57
6	Salary of Supporting Staffs	119.800	855,71
7	Food Expenses	35.100	250,71
8	Clinic Uniform and Bedsheets expenses	24.850	177,50
9	Printing and Transportation expenses	6.785	48,46
10	Miscellaneous Expenses	9.254	66,10
	Total Expenses of Free Winter Clinic 2024	1.718.175	12.272,68

Special Note of Appreciation

The realization of Free Winter Clinic 2024 was made possible through the generous funding provided by **Ernst-Rautschka-Stiftung, Germany**. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Dolpo Tulku Charitable Foundation and Dolpo Tulku e.V. board members, clinic staff, and all volunteers whose unwavering belief in the potential of making a difference through persistence and determination played a pivotal role. Our sincere gratitude goes to the donor organization, **Ernst-Rautschka-Stiftung**, without whom the success of Free Winter Clinic 2024 would not have been possible. Their generosity and unwavering support deserve special acknowledgment.

We would also like to extend our thanks to all the participants and volunteers who demonstrated exceptional dedication and hard work. Their commitment contributed significantly to the positive impact of the clinic. Lastly, we express our appreciation to the local communities for their continuous support and trust in our endeavors.

Furthermore, we want to recognize and convey our gratitude to the entire staff of the Free Winter Clinic 2024. This includes Dr. Sameer Poudel, acupuncturist Anjali Tamang, Pawan Thapa, Amchi Dawa Gyalpo, Nurse Tsering Wangmo, Nurse Pema Bhuti, Tsering Deckyi(Health Assistant) and Tsering Palzom Thakali (Administrator), whose contributions have been invaluable.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the Free Winter Clinic 2024 played a crucial role in addressing healthcare challenges in Dolpa and neighboring regions. The collaboration between DTCF and Stupa Community Hospital, along with the support from various stakeholders, contributed to the clinic's success. Despite challenges, the clinic's achievements highlight the positive impact on the health and well-being of the communities served. Continuous feedback and support are encouraged for the improvement of future medical camps. Feedback can be provided on DTCF's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/DolpoTulku) or via email at info@dolpotulku.org.

