

Out of the rubble

Loma Linda University works to strengthen Hopital Adventiste d'Haiti

Eight-year-old Sebastien Lamothe was playing with his friend and grandmother in a second-floor apartment of a three-story building in the Carrefour district of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, when the earth started to shake.

The city laid in ruins as Sebastien's aunt rushed to the house where her nephew and mother were last seen. The house was little more than rubble, and she was told that everyone inside was dead.

Sebastien has never had an easy life; he's never known his father, and his mother died of an illness last year. Over the next three days, little Sebastien would go through more than most people endure over a lifetime.

Two days after the earthquake, a man passing Sebastien's house heard a voice. Sebastien's aunt rushed to the ruins and heard Sebastien yelling for help. He was squeezed deep in the rubble between the first and third floors of the collapsed building; his right leg was crushed, the bone was exposed. The dead bodies of his friend and grandmother lay on top of him, keeping him trapped in the rubble.

Attempts were immediately made to reach the boy, but progress was slow. Friends and relatives were able to get food and water to Sebastien, but they could not get him out of the collapsed house. As the sun went down on the second day after the earthquake, Sebastien asked only that he not be left alone.

The next day two men, who did not know the family, came to the house, crawled into the rubble, and began to work their way toward Sebastien. After hours of work, one of the men emerged from the rubble. There was not enough room for two people to work. Hours later the other man stumbled out of the ruins with Sebastien in his arms. His aunt then took him to Hopital Adventiste d'Haiti, where doctors determined that his leg needed to be amputated. When Sebastien woke up and saw that he was missing a leg, his only wish was to go to church so a pastor could pray for him and his leg would grow back.

Eight-year-old Sebastien Lamothe is one of many young Haitian children who lost limbs following the catastrophic earthquake on January 12, 2010. Hopital Adventiste d'Haiti is working to help these children and many others. Watch Sebastien's story at <www.llu.edu/360>. ◀

January 12, 2010, found Hopital Adventiste d'Haiti (HAH), located in Carrefour, Haiti, at the epicenter of a fierce 7.1 magnitude earthquake. Early reports suggested the hospital was completely destroyed, while others stated that the hospital was partially destroyed but completely useless.

Fortunately, the hospital, a 70-bed facility built in 1978, received minimal damage. This facility had joined Adventist Health International (AHI), a nonprofit international organization based at Loma Linda University (LLU) in 2001.

"We had already been working with Haiti for a number of years," reports Richard Hart, MD, DrPH, president of LLU and AHI, "so we knew the facility well and had direct relations with the hospital leadership."

In the days that followed, HAH began serving as one of the clinical centers for the nation, helping hundreds of patients and families like Sebastien's. Many of these patients camped outside the hospital, waiting to be treated. Scott Nelson, MD, an LLU School of Medicine graduate based in the Dominican Republic, came to HAH and began performing orthopedic surgeries immediately. He was soon joined by Andrew Haglund, MS, a faculty member from LLU's School of Public Health, who was dispatched to coordinate logistics at the hospital.

"This nation has lost upwards of 225,000 people; almost 1 million of the surviving population are without proper food, water, shelter, or sanitation; and somewhere between 7,000 and 10,000 have had limbs amputated, not to mention the huge number of patients with surgically treated injuries," says Mr. Haglund. "Loma Linda University and Adventist Health International are providing an incredible service here in Haiti and continue to need your support."

To maximize response to the humanitarian crisis in Haiti, Loma Linda University partnered with Florida Hospital in Orlando, Florida. From this collaborative effort, a reliable system for scheduling and transporting medical teams, supplies, and equipment into Port-au-Prince emerged. Loma Linda University has been coordinating volunteers who arrive in Haiti at the rate of 20 to 30 per week, and include medical personnel and logistics support from many other entities.

After visits by both the United States and French ambassa-





Andrew Haglund, MS, assistant professor of geoinformatics in the LLU School of Public Health, served as emergency relief administrator for Hopital Adventiste d'Haiti during the months following the earthquake. Here, he leads out in a morning logistics meeting. ▲

dors, the flow of fresh water and other supplies from international donor agencies increased dramatically.

"All indications are that when some of the temporary medical facilities leave Haiti, Hopital Adventiste d'Haiti will be the most advanced hospital in the country," says Mr. Haglund.

Assistance to the hospital arrived from all corners of the globe, with volunteers coming from Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Union College, ACTS, and many other entities.

The LLU School of Public Health Center for Public Health Preparedness began making plans to help in Haiti immediately after the earthquake and deployed its public health disaster assess-



Scott Nelson, MD (left), a 1996 graduate of LLU School of Medicine, pauses between surgeries with Lesly Archer, MD, medical director of Hopital Adventiste d'Haiti. ▲



Chris Jobe, MD (left), professor of orthopedic surgery in the LLU School of Medicine, chats with Didier Le Bret, French ambassador to Haiti. Behind Dr. Jobe and Mr. Le Bret is the overwhelming orthopedic surgery schedule for HAH. ▲

ment and response team (PHDART), which was on the ground in Carrefour less than 10 days after the quake.

Trained to lead response activities in areas such as environmental health (potable water, sewage, latrines, and trash management), maternal and child health, and communicable disease risk reduction, the team members collaborated with ADRA in responding to the immediate needs of more than 15,000 displaced persons on the grounds of Universite Adventiste d'Haiti. Recognizing the need to quickly assess the health situation and respond to the imminent public health disaster, PHDART's goal was to determine the immediate public health needs and provide emergency public health services for the camp. Additionally, several of the team members worked at HAH to provide safe drinking water and access to latrines in order to improve sanitation conditions on the hospital grounds.

The team's initial assessment showed a priority need to establish a supplemental food program for malnourished children under 5 years of age, as well as to provide services and education for lactating mothers. When the rest of the team returned to the United States on February 2, Walleska Bliss, MPH, project coordinator, and Jesse Bliss, MPH, director of the Center for Public Health Preparedness, stayed behind for three additional days to welcome LLU's International Behavior Health Trauma Team (IBHTT) and to help facilitate IBHTT's integration into the framework created by the PHDART. During the additional days, Mr. and Mrs. Bliss collaborated with UNICEF and CONCERN



Hopital Adventiste d'Haiti withstood the many tremors of the January earthquake and is currently among the best hospitals in all of Haiti. ▲

Worldwide to train four malnutrition nurses and to establish a supplemental feeding center on the campus.

After returning to Loma Linda for two weeks, LLU received a request from ADRA for continued support by the School of Public Health, and so the Blisses returned to Haiti in late February and remained there until the end of March. This time, ADRA asked them to coordinate and manage the entire camp operation, the population of which had grown to more than 20,000 displaced persons.

As Haiti's rainy season brought with it an environment where pathogens can transmit and thrive more easily, preventing the transmission of communicable illnesses was a top priority. School of Public Health personnel worked to address the spread of diarrheal disease and malaria, and had already encountered several cases of typhoid, a serious illness that is easily passed on without proper hygiene and sanitation facilities. David Dyjack, DrPH, dean of LLU School of Public Health, also visited the camp, where he lent his expertise in environmental health and spent several days assisting with the water and sanitation response for the camp, as well as for HAH.

"It was a blessing to see the many volunteers cooperate," reports Chris Jobe, MD, professor, orthopedic surgery, Loma Linda University School of Medicine. Dr. Jobe travelled to HAH with an orthopedic team. "Lives and limbs are being saved because of the collective effort of so many people."

According to Dr. Jobe, people from different countries and religions were working together. "It was a blessing just to see people from all over the world cooperating with one purpose—to save as many lives as they could," he says.

Adventist Health International and the Global Health Institute at LLU continue to receive names of individuals offering to assist at the hospital, as well as donated medical supplies. They will continue to send volunteers to HAH in response to the current needs.

Along with many of the other patients, Sebastien and his aunt moved into a small tent in the post-op section of the camp outside the hospital. He was given crutches and began to learn how to live with one leg.

Living in the camp in front of the hospital is a constant reminder that the future is not decided.

Much of Sebastien's future is uncertain, but there is hope. He has a loving family, and there are now aid organizations that are beginning to work in Haiti specifically to help the many new amputees.

One thing is certain for Sebastien: following his ordeal, he knows that he wants to be a doctor when he grows up.

A website at LLU is accepting donations for Hopital Adventiste d'Haiti. Funds donated thus far have been used to purchase a sterilizer, a generator, orthopedic saws, medications, and numerous other medical supplies.

Individuals who would like to donate to the relief effort of HAH are invited to visit the website at <www.llu.edu/news/haiti> or contact Adventist Health International at 11060 Anderson Street, Loma Linda, California 92350. The phone number is (909) 558-4540. Please make checks payable to: Adventist Health International—Haiti.

Look for a special documentary on Sebastien, Hopital Adventiste d'Haiti, and the aftermath of the January earthquake. Titled "Out of the Rubble," the documentary premiered this summer in Atlanta, Georgia.