

The Impact of Surgical Humanitarian Outreach in the Haiti Earthquake and Beyond

Kathleen M. Casey, MD, FACS, Director, Operation Giving Back, American College of Surgeons

The earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, was epic in scale, in terms of both devastation and humanitarian response. Historic levels of care, resources, and civil and military support mobilized almost instantaneously. Medical needs were grave and far reaching, including a preponderance of surgical injuries. Tragically, an estimated 225 000 died from related trauma, but in the immediate aftermath, to save life and limb, more than 16 000 surgical procedures were performed.



Increasingly, the role of surgery in global public health and disaster response is becoming seen as essential. A growing surgical burden associated with traumatic injuries, maternal health complications, and mounting chronic disease worldwide highlights some critical needs. These include improved surgical infrastructure, investment in education and training to expand the surgical and anesthesia workforce, prioritization of surgical safety and outcomes, and coordination of efforts. An ability to provide safe surgical care contributes to the health of communities by decreasing disability and premature death and can be both cost-effective and sustainable.

The cover photograph was taken on the grounds of Port Au Prince's Hopital de l'Universite d'Etat d'Haiti in the days following January's earthquake. In the open air, surgical care, post-operative management, rehabilitation, and recovery were provided with expertise and compassion under a sea of hospital tents. The American College of Surgeons remains committed to the ongoing needs of the earthquake victims and our Haitian colleagues. In Haiti and across the globe, the ACS's Operation Giving Back program facilitates humanitarian outreach in order to advance excellence in surgical delivery and disaster response to those in greatest need of our care.

Get your photograph of a disaster event/response effort considered for the cover of *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*. See the Instructions for Authors at the back of the issue or www.dmphp.org for details.