



## Visiting a SIGN Program in Kenya

By Dr. Kyle Dickson, from Bellaire, Texas

Occasionally there are people who you meet and you think, “Thank you, God, for placing this person on Earth.” Dr. Giuseppe Gaido is one of those rare individuals. The people he has helped, and the lives he has changed for the good, are innumerable. After 25 years in Kenya and two years at St. Orsola Hospital Matiri, he is an exemplary servant of our fellow human beings.

My journey to Matiri, Kenya, was somewhat chaotic due to a last-minute shift and new COVID regulations. My very organized wife had Dr. Zirkle, Jeanne Dillner, Dr. Gaido, and staff working overtime to make the trip happen. I’m grateful for all their support because after the COVID year off, I needed my battery recharged. We are living in a time where so much of the world is dividing us. I need to see the positive side of people giving their all to help the human family. When you see what can be accomplished by people with so little, my problems seem so trivial and minute that I feel guilty even considering them problems.

Dr. Gaido said many times, “I’m very sorry this may not be hard enough for you.” My response was, “Yes Dr. Gaido, the work was hard enough for me.” Operating without a C-arm, from a month-old segmental femur and femoral neck fracture, a three-month-old “T” supracondylar elbow fracture, a 3-month-old epiphyseal distal humerus fracture, a failed radius fracture due to lack of strong enough plates, a neglected hip fracture due to lack of equipment that required a hemiarthroplasty, a 3

month old distal “T” femur fracture, to a pelvic fracture, **I had to use all 30 years of trauma experience to**

**take someone totally disabled to a hopefully functionally working adult.** Orthopaedic trauma is the

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greatest cause of disability in these countries, and if you aren’t able to work, you will not survive.

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**Dr. Gaido (left) and Dr. Dickson operated together for 1 week at St. Orsola Hospital Matiri.**

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**Farr Dickson traveled with his father to observe surgery.**

I am slow, but I recognized something special in Dr. Gaido. I told him that he was crazy for giving so much of his life while living in poverty. His reply was, "I did what was needed, not what I wanted." How profound! One cannot help wondering what kind of world this would be if more people felt like him.

Fortunately, I was able to take my youngest son with me. As a dad of 6 children, you hope to expose them to extraordinary people. The people we met are a wonderful and tireless team dedicated to making a difference in their local human family.



**Dr. Dickson (green cap) joined Dr. Gaido on many difficult surgeries.**



**St. Orsola Hospital Matiri is in a rural community, but it is the busiest SIGN Program in Kenya.**

femur and tibia that was treated with SIGN Nails and required multiple skin grafts with many dehiscence's over a year and half.

Sometimes doctors must be more than doctors and think out of the box. This poor woman had a baby at home who was starving to death unless she got breast milk. Dr. Gaido made arrangements for this to happen in the hospital. Two years later, Dr. Gaido was seeing a young lady in orthopaedic clinic who asked if he remembered her. Nancy was there with her 2-year-old child and her husband. Dr. Gaido had saved her and influenced generations of her family. They brought him a bag of eggs—a simple but portend gift of appreciation that brings a tear to my eyes.

I want to thank SIGN and Dr. Gaido for recharging my batteries, strengthening my faith in the human family and making me a better person as I strive to focus on "not where I'm at but where I'm going."

Dr. Gaido has thousands of wonderful appreciative patients. I felt this warmth and peace in a handful of patients over the week.

One favorite of Dr. Gaido is Nancy, a 20-year-old who was in a horrible motorcycle versus truck accident. She was refused treatment at two hospitals due to funding before landing on the steps of Dr. Gaido. She had a grade 3 open segmental

# 6 Straight Days of Complicated Cases

By Dr. Justin Duke, from Denver, Colorado

From the capital city of Nairobi, Kenya, head roughly four hours northeast to the county of Meru, and you will find St. Orsola Hospital Matiri and Dr. Giuseppe Gaido. Once you leave the pavement, you'll travel 2.5 miles down an unpaved road best suited for off-road vehicles before arriving at the busiest SIGN Program in Kenya.

Dr. Gaido has established quite an impressive program for treating extremely complex orthopaedic trauma injuries for the poorest of Kenya's patients. His patients come from hours away because they have no other options. He treats these patients with help from SIGN and other donors that help sustain his mission of 'unconditional love and service'. He also does this without the luxury of working fluoroscopy or a fracture table.

In August of 2021, despite the global pandemic, I brought Dr. Gaido a resupply of essential

implants, external fixators, and donated supplies and instruments. I am primarily a total joint specialist, but I was intrigued and inspired by the SIGN Model and Mission, and I volunteered for a SIGN trip.

**I was able to operate with Dr. Gaido for six straight days and was amazed at the complexity of the cases as well as the challenges of treating such difficult cases in a remote facility.**

The vast majority of the cases that we operated on had their initial injury weeks previously, and the 'newest' fracture we treated was already 7 days post injury. There were numerous intra-articular distal femur fractures as well as high energy subtrochanteric fractures that are rarely seen in the USA.

The proliferation of this epidemic of high energy (and often open and contaminated) fractures is due to the availability of cheap motorcycles. Dr. Gaido says that when he first came to Kenya from Italy 25 years ago, the injuries were minimal compared to what he sees now.

I encourage all orthopaedic surgeons to become involved with SIGN, even if they aren't a trauma surgeon by specialty, as they can have a significant impact on global musculoskeletal care by volunteering with SIGN.



**Dr. Duke (left) delivered SIGN Implants and performed surgery with Dr. Gaido.**



**Dr. Duke (left) shared his expertise as a joint specialist and partnered with Dr. Gaido on fracture surgeries.**



# 2021 Haiti Earthquake Disaster Response

Immediately after a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck near Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on Aug. 14 we asked SIGN Surgeons how we can help. With 15 SIGN Programs in the country, there is significant local capacity to provide trauma surgery for people injured by collapsed building and falling debris.

Dr. Pierre Woolley requested a resupply of implants for his hospital and to distribute to other SIGN Surgeons in the country, and we immediately sent a large shipment.

Dr. Dylan Nugent, a former SIGN Program Manager for a mission hospital in Kenya, contacted us before traveling to Haiti to support surgeons at Centre De Sante Lumiere Hospital. We sent him with a SIGN Starter Set so he can perform surgery, train local surgeons, and establish a SIGN Program.

The lead surgeon at Centre De Sante Lumiere says that they have been operating, but nearly a week after the earthquake there were 100 patients still waiting for surgery to stabilize a broken bone. This donated set of instruments and implants will address the immediate need for surgery, as well as provide a long-term solution for fracture care in the community.



**SIGN Staff ship a SIGN Starter Set to Centre De Sante Lumiere Hospital in Haiti.**

**You can help with the cost of sending these implants to Haiti, as well as help SIGN be prepared to respond to the next natural disaster or conflict situation by donating at [www.signfracturecare.org/haiti-earthquake](http://www.signfracturecare.org/haiti-earthquake)**



*Your gift* provides  
**healing surgery to help people quickly recover from trauma injuries!**

*Donate today!*

**Use this form or text SIGN to 91999 or go to [signfracturecare.org/donate](http://signfracturecare.org/donate)**



# Prepared for Disasters

Before the 2010 Haiti earthquake, there were SIGN Programs at four hospitals in the country. Dr. Lewis Zirkle and Jeanne Dillner traveled to Haiti within a week of the quake and operated at several hospitals. With the surgeons they trained and contacts they made, SIGN



Doctors examine a patient at University de la Paix Hospital.

launched programs at nine hospitals in Haiti within one year, and now there are 15 in the country.

Responding to that disaster launched a decade of sustainable orthopaedic care, and now those SIGN Surgeons are the first responders to the recent disaster.



Patients wait for surgical care at Centre de Sante Lumiere Hospital.

# Healing Surgery in Haiti

Sometimes, a photo tells the whole story. Jean Denis, a 42-year-old from Petion-Ville, Haiti, is able to squat and smile after SIGN Surgery.

He was injured in a traffic accident in June, which left him with a fractured tibia. He came to Hopital Bienfaisance de Pignon the same day, where doctors immediately treated his wounds. Two days later, Dr. Julimiste Ernst-Max used a donated SIGN Nail to stabilize Jean Denis' fracture. He was able to return home two days after surgery.

When he returned for a follow-up appointment six weeks later, he was not able to afford an x-ray, but his squat and smile pose indicates that he is healing well and has returned to full function.

Now he is able to return to work, and his injury will not be an additional complication to the very difficult situation as Haiti recovers and rebuilds following the recent earthquake.



Thank you for supporting SIGN, and for donating the implant Jean Denis needed to heal from a broken leg. Your gifts provide life-transforming surgery for people who could not otherwise afford care. You are fulfilling the SIGN Vision to create equality of fracture care throughout the world by supporting surgeons and patients in the world's poorest places.



451 Hills Street, Suite B, Richland, WA 99354  
 P: 509.371.1107 | F: 509.371.1316  
 info@signfracturecare.org | signfracturecare.org



August 2021

Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Address\*\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone:(\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_ I am a member of Kiwanis

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

YES! I would like to give a healing gift. Enclosed is my gift of:

\$50 \$150 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 Other amount \_\_\_\_\_

This gift is (check one):  in honor  in memory  Haiti/Disaster

Honoree Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send a personalized card to: \_\_\_\_\_

Address\*\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Payment Method:

Check enclosed (payable to "SIGN")

Charge my:

VISA MasterCard

American Express Discover Card

\_\_\_\_\_ Credit Card Number

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ CVC # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature

\*\*Must have full address if credit card is used\*\*



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As of July 2021

**18,696**  
Patients Healed

**20** SIGN  
Programs Started

**194** Hospitals  
received implants

**49** Countries  
have been sent  
shipments

**5** SIGN Trauma  
Session Webinars

## Contact SIGN

P 509.371.1107  
F 509.371.1316  
info@signfracturecare.org  
signfracturecare.org



See SIGN's privacy policy  
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Each airtime is  
broadcast nationwide

## TRAUMA HEALERS

SAVING LIVES, LIMBS AND  
LIVELIHOODS IN LOW RESOURCE COUNTRIES

### A Documentary Featuring **SIGN Fracture Care**

airing on **180+ PBS** stations on:

Thursday, September 9  
6pm & 11pm PDT

Friday, September 10  
7am PDT

Saturday, September 11  
2am & 10am PDT

Monday, September 13  
1am PDT

Please share with family and friends,  
so they can learn about SIGN's mission and work.