



SIGN Surgeons Respond After Haiti Quake



ABOVE: Obelis had SIGN Surgery after breaking his leg for a second time.

BELOW: The recovery ward at Hôpital Adventiste d'Haiti continues to be full a month after the quake.

Just before 8:30 in the morning on August 14, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck near Port-au-Prince, Haiti. At least 2,200 people were killed and more than 12,000 seriously injured.

At 15 hospitals with SIGN Programs, like Hôpital Adventiste d'Haiti in Port-au-Prince, people injured by falling debris, crushed buildings, car accidents, and more quickly arrived. Because the SIGN Surgeons there are already trained in trauma surgery and have the instruments and implants they need to operate, they were able to provide definitive treatment for patients right away.

Obelis, 56, had been injured in a traffic accident in 2020. He did not seek treatment for his fractured leg, and it healed in a shortened malunion. When the earthquake struck, he tried to run but his leg broke again. He came to Hôpital Adventiste in a splint and with no hope. His leg had been broken, he had suffered a year of disability, and now the bone was broken again.

But SIGN Surgeons were able to use a SIGN Nail to straighten his leg and stabilize the fracture. Obelis is now recovering and has regained his ability to walk.

Discover more about SIGN Surgeons responding to the Haiti Earthquake inside this newsletter. You can provide the implants they need to continue healing injured patients by donating with the enclosed form or at signfracturecare.org/donate



Haiti Aftershock: A New SIGN Program

By Dr. Dylan Nugent

Dr. Nugent is an orthopaedic surgeon in Missouri, a former SIGN Program manager at Tenwek Hospital in Kenya, and he is currently traveling to Malawi to train surgeons and start a new SIGN Program there.

In the hours following the Haiti earthquake, I looked for a way to get there and serve in a disaster relief capacity. I was surprised when Dr. Jose Dominguez, a general surgeon from my hospital, called me and asked me to join his team in the upcoming week. He has been

servicing at Centre de Sante Lumiere (CDSL), a small mission hospital in Les Cayes, for several years.

The local orthopaedic surgeon, Dr. Hugues Lamy, was working tirelessly to triage patients and care for open wounds and fractures. He was running out of basic supplies and had very few implants to work with – mostly a conglomeration of donated plates, screws, and a few external fixators. **He did not have any intramedullary implants, and the number of patients with long bone fractures was growing daily. He needed a SIGN System, and he needed it quickly.**

I contacted Dr. Zirkle and within a few days a SIGN Set arrived at my front door, just in time to carry with me to Dr. Lamy and CDSL. One week after the earthquake, the first SIGN Surgery was done at CDSL, and our patient was up and walking with physical therapy later that day! We did three nails that day, and 12 before our team left after a busy week of surgery and other fracture care.

More importantly, Dr. Lamy was an excellent student of the SIGN System, and I had the honor of watching him do the last SIGN Surgery before I left with the help of his general surgery colleagues. He passed his “final test” with flying colors, getting the interlocks placed just before our team left for Port-au-Prince.

When I first started preparing to leave for Haiti, I thought I could use my skills as an orthopaedic trauma surgeon to help with the immediate needs of the numerous patients with fractures and open wounds.

Thanks to the incredible work of the people at SIGN and the generosity of their supporters, our small team accomplished that and so much more.

Dr. Lamy now has a new skill set and a sustainable supply of orthopaedic implants to continue treating earthquake victims as well as ongoing patients from traffic accidents. Without SIGN, many patients would be left in casts and external fixators, and they would likely stay in the hospital for long periods of time. But with a SIGN Nail in place, patients will walk out of the hospital and begin to rebuild their lives and their country.



Dr. Nugent and Dr. Lamy helped 12 people with SIGN Surgery in the first week of the new program.

Month After Quake, Patients Continue to Arrive

By Dr. Scott Nelson

Dr. Nelson is the Medical Director and SIGN Program Manager at Hôpital Adventiste d'Haiti. He was working in Dominican Republic when the 2010 Haiti earthquake struck, and he immediately traveled to Port-au-Prince to assist with disaster relief. In 2018 he and his family moved to Haiti to work at HAH full time.

The last few weeks have been a blur. Since the day of the earthquake the hospital has been overflowing with patients. One month later the situation continues. We wrap up a big day in the OR, we have 50+ patients on our inpatient ortho service and the clinics are busier than ever.

We are all quite exhausted, but on our way out take a walk through the Salle d'Urgence (emergency room) just to make sure no more cases had arrived. There is a 12-year-old girl

with a deformed arm, a lady with a pelvis fracture from the earthquake, another lady with bilateral forearm fractures from an accident, two men with acetabular fracture dislocations, a patient with a wound infection, and another guy who had cut his arm and was walking around dripping blood everywhere. The Salle d'Urgence did not look much different than the night of the disaster. We have no beds available in the hospital and many patients are still waiting longer than usual. Meanwhile we try our best to keep up with the case load.

Even though the situation is not much different than the day after the earthquake, a lot has happened in the last month. The first 4 days after the earthquake Dr. Jacky Jean (ortho surgeon at HAH) and I operated day and night. Soon after that,

help arrived. Ortho trauma surgeons, anesthesia providers, nurses and a logistics coordinator have all been a tremendous help. It was providential that we hired 4 new nurses in our OR and trained them in the week before the earthquake. More recently we were able to coordinate a formal rotation for the ortho residents from the state hospital. This is an amazing experience for them and also a big help for us. During a normal month we average about 100 operations, but in the month following the earthquake more than 300 major surgeries were performed.

The reputation of Hôpital Adventiste d'Haiti is blossoming. Other hospitals, organizations, and individuals have been reminded about our mission to give top quality care to all classes of people. Other institutions are constantly calling to transfer cases for a higher level of care. Whether their injuries are earthquake related or not, we find the means to take care of all these people.



ABOVE: Dr. Nelson (right) and Dr. Cho check on Carlande, who is recovering from SIGN Surgery after being trapped in a collapsed building.



RIGHT: Patients injured in the quake continue to arrive at the hospital.



How You've Helped This Year...

As of Aug. 2021

21,738
Patients Healed

27 SIGN
Programs Started

214 Hospitals
received implants

51 Countries
have been sent
shipments

6 SIGN Trauma
Session Webinars

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See SIGN's privacy policy
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National Estate Planning Awareness Week: October 18—24, 2021

Creating a will and estate plan is an important step in protecting those who are closest to you. When you choose to remember SIGN Fracture Care in your will, you will be providing a lasting impact to the SIGN Family of surgeons and patients. Please notify us if you choose to include SIGN in your estate plan.

IRA Qualified Charitable Distributions

If you are 70 ½ or older, you can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution annually from your IRA to SIGN Fracture Care, tax free, up to \$100,000. The gift will count toward any required minimum distribution.