

SIGN Continues Work in Haiti 5 Years after Earthquake



by Hannah Corcoran

After a catastrophic earthquake hit Haiti on January 12, 2010, SIGN fracture Care International increased its presence in the country to provide assistance and treat the injured. Five years later, progress is made, but much more needs to be done.

SIGN continues to train local surgeons [in Haiti](#) and provide implants for injured civilians.

Lewis Zirkle, M.D., President and Founder of SIGN, praises the local residents for their work.

“The residents are the heroes,” Zirkle says. “The earthquake occurred, and these young men ran to the hospital and started treating patients quickly with the implants and equipment they had. They were psychologically traumatized, yet they rose above that. This is particularly cogent because the nursing school was destroyed and that was hanging over their heads. We have continued to work with the residents in the [residency training programs](#), and I have the highest regard for the progress they’ve made and the expertise they provide in treating fractures in Haiti.”



SIGN worked with local surgeons to treat fractures using interlocking screw systems.

“We went back to visit these places after and found that the patients were doing well,” Zirkle says. “This brought a new concept, which we have started to use following Pakistan earthquakes.”

However, residents and civilians still need more assistance. This includes more implants, efficient hospitals, adequate wages for staff members and collaboration between residency programs and NGO-operated hospitals.

“The problem is that these residents go through and they learn a lot, but they don’t have jobs to go to when they finish. If there could be a network to help them, it would be really nice,” Zirkle says. “We need collaboration a lot of times. We don’t want to get out of our primary goal, which

is designing implants and manufacturing them for use in developing countries. We would like to receive other implants, such as commonly-used plates. Other equipment that is used in the U.S. could be used there. A principle that SIGN follows is, if you teach how to take care of a certain problem, such as pelvic fractures, you should provide the implants so they can implement the teaching.”

Aside from the earthquake’s impact on Haiti, road traffic accidents remain a problem. SIGN is working on developing [trauma centers](#) in Haiti and other countries to address this problem.



“As these traumatic accidents increase, that’s what is taking most of the resources,” Zirkle says. “The problem is there’s not enough operating time, so patients wait on the ward, which means that the operation takes longer when you do get them to the operating room, because the fracture started to heal. We’re working in several other countries throughout the world, developing trauma centers, to see if we can expedite care for these people.”

Learn more about SIGN Fracture Care International [here](#).

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