

# RUSH TO AID

## MEDICAL CENTER VOLUNTEERS HELP HAITIANS

*"There are very few words to describe the devastation, but I'm encouraged by the lives that have been saved..."*

That Jan. 24 post from Olyemisi Odugbesan, M.D., a UNMC instructor of anesthesiology, was the first on-the-ground report from UNMC's initial wave of medical responders.

Soon after the Jan. 12 earthquake struck the Caribbean nation, UNMC Chancellor Harold M. Maurer, M.D., appointed Rubens Pamies, M.D., vice chancellor for academic affairs and a native of Haiti, and Ayman El-Mohandes, M.B.B.Ch., M.D., M.P.H., dean of UNMC's College of Public Health, to lead the medical center's response to the disaster.

Thirteen volunteers – seven physicians and six nurses from UNMC and The Nebraska Medical Center – composed the first wave of volunteers sent to Port-au-Prince. Additional teams will follow in the weeks ahead.

"Our teams have done great work; people are so appreciative," said Dr. Pamies, who led the first group to Haiti.

"We are proud to have been the first health care team from Nebraska to send volunteers into the eye of the storm in Haiti," Dr. El-Mohandes said. "Our volunteer response has been tremendous and will continue into the foreseeable future."

During the first deployment, Danielle Dohrmann of UNMC International Health and Medical Education was the charge nurse in the operating room at the Project Medishare


Hospital at the Port-au-Prince Airport.

When Dohrmann and the others arrived, three nurses were attempting to care for 300 patients. Within a week, Dohrmann and fellow UNMC volunteers, registered nurse Nick Hall and trauma surgeon David Young, M.D., helped introduce an organizational structure that allowed the hospital to become the largest in Haiti.

"We brought excellent clinical care, organizational leadership, strategy and a sense of collaboration and dedication," she said. "We saved a lot of lives and helped a lot of people."

Others on the first team provided round-the-clock clinical expertise at the community and general hospitals. With deployment needs continually assessed from ground zero, UNMC and The Nebraska Medical Center have called for nurses with wound care experience, pharmacists, physical therapists and physician assistants with orthopaedics and plastics expertise.

For more information about disaster response efforts, contact operations leader Magda Peck, Sc.D., associate dean for Community Engagement and Public Health Practice in the UNMC College of Public Health, at [mpeck@unmc.edu](mailto:mpeck@unmc.edu).

As for Dr. Odugbesan, she's willing to deploy again. "There are people who need help there. They need rehabilitation. Yes, I want to go back." 



Nick Hall, a nurse with The Nebraska Medical Center, tends to triplets Carly, Carlins and Carlene, who were born days earlier in a camp housing earthquake victims. The babies arrived at the Project Medishare/University of Miami Global Institute's hospital drowsy, dehydrated and septic, but became more alert after receiving fluids and antibiotics. "Taking care of these three babies was one of my happiest times in Haiti," Hall said. Below: UNMC's Danielle Dohrmann became the charge nurse and organized the operating room at the Project Medishare Hospital at the Port-au-Prince Airport.



The University of Nebraska Foundation's UNMC Haitian Relief and Outreach Fund supports the medical center's volunteer efforts in Haiti. UNMC's goal is to raise \$100,000 to help volunteers offset the personal costs of deployment. Donations may be made online at <http://nufoundation.org/haiti> or by mail: Omaha Office of the University of Nebraska Foundation, 2285 S. 67th St., Suite 200, Omaha, NE 68106.



Read reports from UNMC's response teams at [notesofhopeinhaiti.blogspot.com](http://notesofhopeinhaiti.blogspot.com). View a gallery of photos and see how 808 push-ups raised \$8,700 in relief funds, at [unmc.edu/connect](http://unmc.edu/connect)