

# Konbit Sante

CAP-HAITIEN HEALTH PARTNERSHIP



Drs. Brad Cushing and Sam Broaddus meet with Haitian colleagues at Justinian Hospital.

## Surgical Team Invests in Education for Haitian Colleagues

Earlier this year, doctors Sam Broaddus and Brad Cushing, Konbit Sante volunteers, completed a comprehensive analysis of surgical capacity at the Justinian Hospital in Cap-Haitien, Haiti. The goal was to understand and improve surgical care in the

northern region of the country, an area of more than 825,000 people.

**“We’ve seen what the health conditions are like in Haiti and how competent but resource-poor Haitian surgeons struggle to deliver even a basic level of surgical care.”**

Dr. Broaddus, senior partner at Portland Urologic Associates, and a resident of Gorham, and Dr. Cushing, chief of surgery at Maine Medical Center and a resident of Cape Elizabeth, worked side by side with their counterparts in Cap-Haitien, evaluating everything from surgical

staffing levels and operating room equipment, infrastructure and surgical inventories to infection control and surgical resident education. This was Cushing’s first and Broaddus’ tenth trip to Haiti. Here’s what they found.

The surgical ward is housed in a 115-year-old one-story stone building, approximately 20 x 20 meters in size. There are 26 beds in the men’s ward and 20 beds in the women’s ward, and they are almost always full. Ninety percent of the patients in the ward are post-op with the remainder waiting for surgery due to

the backlog of cases for the operating rooms. Family members accompany patients and tend to their dietary needs since there is no food service for patients. Residents and attending staff often chip in to purchase food and medicines for patients who have no family or money.

The service is staffed 24/7 by five attending surgeons and five resident house staff. There is always an attending or resident on call, and they are contacted by nurses via cell phone when needed. As in other parts of the hospital, space is at a premium, beds are close together, electrical supply is intermittent, and the service has no sanitary facilities. Basic supplies are scarce, and there is no reliable blood supply.

Two functioning operating rooms are located in an adjacent building. These two operating rooms serve general surgery, orthopedics, urology, and urgent OB cases. A third operating room lacks essential equipment including anesthesia machine and rolling

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This picture of the surgical ward, showing the back of the building and the central courtyard, was taken from the residents’ quarters.

## Ninth Medical Shipment Goes to Haiti

On Saturday, April 19, volunteers packed and sent Konbit Sante’s ninth 40’ sea container of medical equipment and supplies to Cap-Haitien. The container arrived in Haiti six weeks later and was delivered to the hospital with no significant problems. What was in the container?

- A GE portable x-ray machine donated by Maine medical Center. This machine is in excellent working condition, but isn’t compatible with the newer digital imaging technology needed here. This machine is perfect for Haiti because it’s a work horse and can function when there is no public power. Along with the x-ray machine was a supply of x-ray film, generously donated by Kodak.
- Three pallets of Purell hand sanitizer donated by GOJO Industries of Akron, Ohio.



Purell Hand Sanitizer donated by GOJO Industries comes off the container at Justinian Hospital.

- Medical exam room and office furnishings donated by Maine Medical Center, PrimeCare, Dermatology Associates, and the YWCA.
- Piping and other materials for major water system improvements at the Justinian Hospital where there is currently little clean water for staff or patients. These materials were purchased with donations from Maine and New Hampshire Rotary Clubs and GlobalGiving.org.

Staples in the shipment include badly-needed bandages, sutures, gowns, gloves, and other medical supplies.

Spaces to store materials and stage this shipment were generously donated by Mercy Hospital and also by the City of Portland’s Ports and Transportation Department as part of our Sister City relationship with Cap-Haitien.

## Surgical Team *continued*

surgical lights. One anesthesiologist works with all surgical services – surgery, OB/GYN, orthopedics, and emergency services. A second anesthesiologist, on assignment from Cuba, is expected to arrive soon. The OR keeps its own 55-gallon drum of water on site since there are frequent problems with the hospital water supply. A backup power system purchased and installed by CURE International and Konbit Sante, provides 1-2 hours of emergency power (without air conditioning), during frequent power outages.

Medical residents report that the most common surgical diagnoses and procedures (excluding OB, orthopedic, and urology) include groin hernia, abdominal blunt trauma, peritonitis, diabetic foot amputations, intestinal obstruction, open abdominal trauma, and acute appendicitis. The introduction of small motor scooters for inexpensive taxi service around town has led to an increase in blunt head trauma.

Housing is provided for surgical residents in a newly-renovated space above the private



Family members provide care and comfort in the women's surgical ward at Justinian Hospital.

ward, but residents pay for food and other expenses out of their approximately US\$200/month salaries which are not paid every month due to government shortages. The classroom/meeting room for surgical teaching is 3x3 meters and has no teaching aids, no textbooks, no internet access, no x-ray view box, and a dated curriculum.

“We’ve seen what the health conditions are like in Haiti and how competent but resource-poor Haitian surgeons struggle to deliver even a basic level of surgical care,” states Dr. Cushing. “In addition to making on-site improvements and gathering equipment and supplies,” says Dr. Broaddus, “we felt that training opportunities in Maine could significantly promote—and speed—positive change in surgical care at the Justinian Hospital.” So a surgical training program was initiated.

Dr. Jerry Bernard and Dr. Kissinger Fils, fourth year surgical residents at Justinian Hospital, are visiting Portland this summer for six-week surgical rotations, generously sponsored by Drs. Broaddus and Cushing, under the auspices of the Maine Medical

Center Department of Surgery’s International Program and Konbit Sante. Drs. Broaddus and Cushing will also host the attending in charge of residents’ education in the fall. While here, the Haitian doctors attend daily rounds with MMC surgical house staff, observe surgical procedures, and participate in educational conferences. In addition, they are meeting with non-clinical professionals to learn about organizational aspects of running a high-quality surgical service.

Chief residents will have one more year at Justinian after training in Maine, during which time they will develop a system to track cases and complications, and also develop protocols for improving surgical outcomes. According to Drs. Broaddus and Cushing, this will be an ongoing educational program and is already looked upon as a unique opportunity for surgical residents at Justinian Hospital. On the U.S. side, the Konbit Sante team is looking for surgical equipment and supplies and for other surgeons who are interested in sponsoring and mentoring Haitian colleagues.



Dr. Cushing works shoulder to shoulder with Haitian colleagues at Justinian Hospital.

## Iconic Signs and Video Orient New Patients at Justinian Hospital

Justinian Hospital can be a confusing and intimidating place for new patients. Two projects initiated by the joint Haiti and U.S. women’s health teams will help orient new hospital patients.

Colorful iconic signs will help patients with or without written language skills navigate their way around the hospital campus. In addition, a welcome video has been produced, based on a script in Creole written by the Haitian women’s team. Acting, including a pillow-padded woman going into maternity, was provided by a trio of medical residents. The various segments – completing a *dossier* (medical file), going to the laboratory, going to maternity, and an educational segment about pediatrics – were narrated by a student nurse who memorized her script on the spot. Editing was generously donated by Catama Film & Video.



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### HAITIAN PROVERB

*Kat je pa koupe bwa kwoche.*

*Four eyes don't cut a tree crookedly.*

*This proverb tells us that working together gets the job done better.*

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It's easy, it's green, and it saves \$\$\$ for Konbit Sante. Of course you can unsubscribe at any time. To receive electronic updates, please visit the NEWS page at [www.konbitsante.org](http://www.konbitsante.org).

### We Welcome Your Comments:

[info@konbitsante.org](mailto:info@konbitsante.org)

## Konbit Sante Builds Pediatric Emergency Room

In March 2008, Konbit Sante was awarded a \$30,000 grant from the Dorthea Ross Haus Foundation to build a pediatric emergency room at Justinian Hospital, the



New pediatric emergency is situated next to the Konbit Sante-funded outpatient clinic.

largest public hospital in Cap-Haitien. The project, which is underway and is expected to take three months to complete, will also include improvements to water and sanitation systems in the pediatric facility.

This international children's fund grant will improve and expand critical pediatric care at this 250-bed teaching hospital. Justinian Hospital's crowded pediatric facility has a normal inpatient population of about 30 children, with beds often within a foot or two of one another, and this new facility will represent a great improvement in our Haitian colleagues' ability to provide good and timely care to critically ill children.

## Addressing "Urgencies" at Justinian Hospital

"You just have to go to Justinian and see for yourself" was the answer to so many of our questions put to the staff and volunteers of Konbit Sante about emergency services at Justinian University Hospital," says Dr. John Saucier, emergency room physician at Maine Medical Center. So, in November 2007 Dr. Saucier, chair of Konbit Sante's emergency medicine team, and Dr. Eric Lowe, chef resident in emergency medicine at Maine Medical Center, went to Cap-Haitien for an assessment and recommendation for developing a partnership. Dr. Tiffany Keenan, attending physician at Miramichi Hospital in New Brunswick's Department of Emergency Medicine, who is working to establish a clinic at Bod Mè in Limbe, became part of the team, providing insights based on her experience in the Haitian health system.

The bottom line is that there is an educated, dedicated, and motivated professional staff working in a difficult environment with inadequate resources. The busy urgent services unit at Justinian Hospital is open 24/7 and sees about 150 patients per day including 100 who are treated in the ambulatory clinic and 50 who are treated in emergency services. Physician coverage consists of 10 interns who are in their fourth year of medical school, several residents, several staff physicians, and 19 nurses under the leadership of Dr. Bienaime. However, there are no cervical collars, no delivery pack, no scoop stretcher or backboard, no staff eye protection, and inadequate water for washing.

Most urgent patients arrive by public transport (tap-tap, taxi, or motor scooter), in the beds of private pickup trucks, or on foot. While the hospital has two ambulances, they do not effectively reduce delays in urgent care because of lack of available telephone service, lack of skilled EMT-type personnel, and lack of emergency supplies.

Speaking about the developing collaboration, Dr. Saucier says, "We are fortunate to have Dr. Khalil Turenne, a respected teacher and clinician on the Justinian Hospital emergency staff to



Patients wait for ambulatory care.

be our Haitian partner." The first efforts will center on developing protocols for the most common clinical problems. We hope that these new protocols will foster improved care and data collection. As a result, there can be more standardized record keeping for common complaints and heightened awareness among the resident and nursing staff about diagnostic and treatment options. "Our hope would be to bring Justinian Hospital to the level of a World Health Organization-defined primary emergency care center," according to Dr. Saucier. "The dedicated staff of the Justinian emergency services team who work with very limited resources moved us, and they can be justly proud of the care they give their patients. To see what can be done without CT scans, the latest antibiotic, and the subspecialist of your choice is something you can't imagine without 'seeing it for yourself'."



Haitian physicians and nurses treat urgencies at Justinian Hospital.

## New Women's Unit at Fort St. Michel to be Staffed by Konbit Sante-Sponsored OB/GYN

The Fort St. Michel clinic, serving an impoverished neighborhood of about 40,000, has added an obstetrics unit and plans to do routine deliveries while referring difficult cases to the Justinian Hospital.

According to Dr. Eva Lathrop, head of Konbit Sante's women's health team, most women in the clinic's catchment area currently deliver at home or in the home of a lay midwife. Ideally the opening of the Fort St. Michel obstetrical service will decrease the barriers many of these women face to having a trained attendant at delivery, and ultimately decrease the maternal morbidity and mortality rates associated with delays in



Dr. Eva Lathrop, head of Konbit Sante's women's health team, with colleague Dr. Youseline Telemaque.

receiving care. The maternal mortality ratio in Haiti is now 680/100,000 births – the highest in the Western Hemisphere and on par with many sub-Saharan African countries – in stark contrast to Cuba's 33/100,000 and the Dominican Republic's 150/100,000 and our 7/100,000 in the U.S.

We are happy to announce that Dr. Youseline Telemaque, with whom we have worked for two years while she completed her residency at Justinian Hospital, will provide invaluable assistance to this unit. Her responsibilities will include providing women's health services at Fort St. Michel, establishing strong referral links between the clinic and the hospital for high-risk pregnancies, training community clinicians, and initiating community outreach. Dr. Telemaque is planning to have Justinian Hospital residents complete rotations at Fort St. Michel to give their training a community/public health perspective. This position is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID/MSH/SDSH PROJECT).

Dr. Telemaque completed her medical school at Université Quisqueya in Port-au-Prince, spent her social service year at Hôpital Sainte-Therese in Hinche, and worked at Centre Medical Beraca in Port-de-Paix before joining Konbit Sante. While doing her residency at the JUH, Dr. Telemaque played an instrumental role in the needs assessment on women's health issues conducted by Konbit Sante in 2006, which was foundational to many of our current efforts related to women's health.

According to Dr. Lathrop, "Dr. Telemaque is a true educator and leader, and her addition to the Konbit Sante and Fort St. Michel staff will have tremendous impact on the way women's health and women's lives are viewed, valued, and cared for in the Cap-Haitien community." Even before Dr. Telemaque began her new position, several hundred women had signed up for prenatal services.

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Women and infant wait for care at the Fort St. Michel clinic.

## Edy Joseph: Konbit Sante Chief Translator (and Diplomat)

Any of you who have been to Cap-Haitien will understand the feeling of reassurance when Edy Joseph joins our team. Whether it's teaching in a medical specialty, discussing organizational issues with hospital or clinic management, or teaching use of GPS systems to our *agents sante* (community health workers), Edy is always capable and good natured. His easy way and his facility with language earn the respect of all he works with, and certainly makes us look – and sound – good.



Konbit Sante's chief translator, Edy Joseph.

Edy was born in Cap-Haitien and studied management at a private university in Port-au-Prince before returning to live in Cap. Speaking of his English skills he says, "When I was very young I started loving the English language, but I didn't dare speak it because in my neighborhood we had a lot of boys and girls of my age who used this language to beg the tourists who came to visit the boulevard close to my house, so I didn't want to be considered as one of them. I really started speaking English in secondary school because it was my favorite subject in class, so

my English teachers used to choose me to volunteer to translate for medical and ophthalmologist teams. I really enjoyed that and I was so proud to be useful to my community. In the greatest part of my career as an interpreter, I've worked in the medical field – either as a dentist interpreter and assistant or as a medical interpreter for teams that came in my church (Methodist Church in Cap-Haitien). One day in 2005, two friends of mine who used to work for Konbit Sante (an organization who really gives the best help to our community), asked me to replace them. And thanks to Konbit Sante I'm now a member of ICEP (International Childhood Enrichment Program) Kids Play, another great organization who provides enjoyment to poor children. I've already built one playground and I think very soon we'll please a lot of poor children because they'll be able to find somewhere to play free and they'll forget their sadness. Isn't that wonderful?"

Edy is married – his wife is a nurse – and they have a young son. Thank you Edy for being our friend and our excellent interpreter.

## For Current News...Visit Our New Website

To better support our mission in Haiti, Konbit Sante has launched a larger and, we hope, more useful website. Please visit

[www.konbitsante.org](http://www.konbitsante.org) to find current news, progress reports on our work in Haiti, and a wide range of resources.

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## How You Can Help

Konbit Sante depends on the generous donations from individuals and organizations to fund our programs. Donations of cash, stocks, or in-kind items are greatly appreciated. For more information please visit our website at [www.konbitsante.org](http://www.konbitsante.org).

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**Our Mission:** To support the development of a sustainable health care system to meet the needs of the Cap-Haitien community with maximum local direction and support.

**Started in 2000,** Konbit Sante's mission is to save lives and improve health care by building local capacity. Konbit Sante teams work at home and in Haiti throughout the year to train Haitian health care providers, to improve public medical facilities, and to prevent disease in local communities.

**About our name:** In Haitian Creole, a konbit is a traditional Haitian method of working together to till your friends' fields as well as your own – a cooperative effort. Sante means health. So the name means working together for health. We have chosen a Creole name to show our respect for and friendship with the people of Haiti and the dedicated local professionals who serve them.



A family care giver rests with her young patient in the surgical ward at Justinian Hospital.

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