



UPDATE ON CHA'S GLOBAL OUTREACH

BY BRUCE COMPTON

The Catholic Health Association's new role in advancing the ministry of healing through international outreach has us working on a variety of projects. Here's a brief update on some of the initiatives. I hope you, the leaders of Catholic health care, will join in.

FIRST GLOBAL SUMMIT

CHA held its first global summit in Atlanta at the conclusion of the 2011 Catholic Health Assembly. The two-day gathering was well attended, and participants gave it high marks for the presentations' wide range of perspectives.

Every speaker during the event highlighted the benefits of partnering with other health systems and nongovernmental organizations that have established overseas services, in order to focus and stretch resources where they can be the most effective in reducing human suffering.

U.S. government officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of Health and Human Services provided tips for pairing with their local public health and global aid agencies. Catholic health care providers with projects in the developing world invited others from the ministry to join their initiatives.

An off-site visit to Medshare, an Atlanta-based charity, helped to greatly increase the participants' understanding of medical surplus donations and medical supply recovery organizations.

Conference discussions and resources are available online at www.chausa.org/International_Outreach_Overview.aspx. Many of these resources will guide CHA as we look to expand, improve upon and continue to define the scope of

international outreach. We are planning our second global summit for June 5-6, 2012, right after next year's CHA Assembly in Philadelphia.

NETWORK, COLLABORATE

As part of our international outreach effort, we are pleased to offer a new, private online site on chausa.org where you can open dialogue and share the wealth of information available in the field. Please sign up and join us -- members can share links to resources and post directly via discussions or blog. The site also features an events calendar which will alert you to upcoming webinars and networking calls on international issues.

The goal of the international outreach networking site is to promote information and resource sharing as well as to stimulate new discussions and opportunities. We hope these professional networking opportunities provide a pathway for open communication and improved impact. If you are interested in joining the group, please email internationaloutreach@chausa.org and put Networking Group in the subject line.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Webinars and networking calls are scheduled quarterly, and you'll find information about them on the networking site. We at CHA are developing presentations on these important topics:

Getting started guide: There are many different ways for organizations to become involved in international outreach. Even the smallest hospitals can make a tremendous difference in helping a community in the developing world, and CHA's getting started guide, soon to be released online, will provide resources and tips for organizations as they assist our global neighbors in need.

Disaster and emergency management: Responding to a disaster is a complex issue that requires planning and preparation prior to the disaster. There are several agencies with the appropriate capacities, relationships and knowledge to prepare for and respond effectively during these emergency situations. Often the best first action is to support these agencies with financial contributions. This discussion will focus on the role of members and appropriate response at the time of a disaster.

Non-communicable, chronic health issues: Recent headlines show that heart disease and obesity are global problems, and they represent a significant health issue in countries already struggling to combat serious infectious diseases. This discussion will focus on our role in helping to address the burden non-communicable, chronic disease puts on health in many developing countries.

What to know about medical surplus: CHA's recent medical surplus study, completed in January 2011, exposed the realities and many difficulties involved in donating medical surplus: To be useful and effective, such donations need to meet critical criteria. The study also revealed that health care stakeholders are highly interested in making medical surplus donations. We are planning discussions to give groups the information and tools they need to identify appropriate medical surplus and link with effective medical supply and recovery organizations.

Partnerships: To advance our ministry in addressing international health needs, it is especially important that we find a way to make both an effective and enduring response. One of CHA's focuses will be looking at the relationship be-

tween public, private, and charitable stakeholders and how to adequately use the available resources each has to offer. This will undoubtedly include partnerships with traditional partners like our sponsoring congregations, Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Medical Mission Board.

We also will draw on resources from the USAID and the State Department's recently established Global Health Initiative (GHI) to help better inform our actions and decisions. Some of the specific GHI targets of interest are directed at continuing support for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, reducing the global burden of malaria, contributing to tuberculosis detection and treatment, promoting maternal and child health, securing better nutrition for food-insecure countries and reducing the prevalence of neglected tropical diseases still endemic to many countries.

Historically, global public health and international outreach have largely been unrecognized or minimized by the public. This trend is changing as the public increasingly recognizes the need for global health solutions and the importance of reaching out. Perhaps never before has the public or government given a greater mandate to the field of global health. That's why it is essential that we capitalize on this support and awareness.

CHA's getting started guide for international outreach will look to address many of the issues faced by Catholic health care institutions as we apply our healing mission to our work in the developing world. By making use of guidelines, services, organizations and information already in place, we can prevent the duplication of efforts, increase effectiveness and better allocate financing for projects.

With so many possibilities, CHA would like to encourage members and others to further involve themselves and use our new resources as they become available. For more information or to request access to the networking site, please contact CHA at internationaloutreach@chausa.org.

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