

A HOSPITAL RISES IN HAITI

BY BRUCE COMPTON

Out of the rubble of the earthquake in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, a hospital is rising. Funded by CHA and its members, the Sur Futuro Foundation and Catholic Relief Services, in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince, the new facility will be a sign of the church's commitment to the community. It also will be a teaching hospital with the same mission as its counterparts in the U.S.: providing high-quality, compassionate care rooted in the belief that every person is a treasure made up of mind, body and spirit.

The multi-building, two-floor Hospital St. Francois de Sales is projected to open in January 2015, five years after the earthquake that killed or made homeless hundreds of thousands, devastated Port-au-Prince and left the country in a humanitarian crisis. The hospital itself was 80 percent destroyed, but it has managed to keep an outpatient clinic functioning.

Wilfred Cadet, MD, MPH, the hospital's chief operating officer, is making sure that all will be ready for the doors to open again. In my travels to Haiti as part of the Joint Steering Committee for the hospital project, I remain in awe of this gentle but passionate man who calls to mind the verses in Sirach 38: "Hold the physician in honor, for he is essential to you, and God it was who established his profession.... Then give the doctor his place lest he leave, for you need him too." This

rebuilding project needs the passion and vision Cadet possesses.

Cadet will be joining us at the 2014 Catholic Health Assembly in both an Innovation Forum and the International Outreach program. Let me introduce him here, to the Catholic health ministry, by describing our recent conversation in Haiti.

GET TO KNOW DR. CADET

I am sitting with Wilfred Cadet in a building on the Hospital St. François de Sales campus in Port-au-Prince. A native of Haiti, he is accustomed to both his country's weather and its social formality, thus he wears a suit and long-sleeved shirt as though it were not nearly 100 degrees in the shade. We pull together two office chairs, surrounded by the sounds of the room's fans and the construction taking place outside of this temporary office's plywood walls.

His thoughts these days, he says, are on making sure "each patient shall receive the best compassionate and quality of care, independently of their social status." He tells me he is preoccupied with recruiting people who have a "heart for the mission of the hospital" — people with passion; men and women who want to give their "all" to the patients. Down the road, he says, the challenge will be to develop and strengthen the staff's team spirit and commitment to living the mission of the hospital through every single action, no matter what their role or title is.

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Wilfred Cadet, MD, MPH



The new Hospital St. Francois de Sales buildings are expected to be finished by 2015.

A pediatrician as well as an administrator, Cadet says his career has been profoundly influenced by an American nurse who worked alongside of him during his early years of practicing medicine in rural Haiti. She helped him “rationalize my clinical approaches of care in the context of a poor, rural setting,” he explains. Political turmoil forced her out of the country, and she left Cadet with the responsibility of running a small, outpatient clinic. “From then, my career was half of the time spent on clinical responsibilities and the other half on administrative duties,” he recalls.

To Cadet, it is especially important to ensure that the people the hospital serves know they are welcome and will receive competent care. He wants them to view the hospital as a significant member of the community and a sign of progress.

“My call today is to do more with regards to empowering women and children in this country,” explains Cadet. “For the hospital, I have the re-

sponsibility to ensure that people keep an eye on the mission and show the hospital’s core values in each of their acts. As a church ministry, this hospital will be the truest sign of Christ’s living presence among the poorest of the poor.”

He wants a hospital staffed with individuals who have the attributes fundamental to his vision: passion, belief in the human dignity of each person and in constant search for excellence.

“In my previous experience as a hospital CEO, I saw the enormous difference those attributes made,” he says. “The staff members who possessed these ingredients were willing to walk the extra mile and provide something extra to the patients.”

To make his point, he tells a story from his time as a hospital administrator. The facility he ran was anticipating the birth of its first set of triplets. The expectant mother, who already had five children, developed a medical emergency, but her pedia-

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trician was not available. Cadet was called in and he delivered the babies, one of whom required ongoing special care for a time.

The infant did not survive, and Cadet recalls having to tell the mother about the death. In that moment, he

says, he witnessed the mother’s grief, mourning her eighth child as deeply as if it were her first and only baby. Experiencing along with her the grief and need for compassion and concern, he further formed his expectation for hospital staff: that they see each patient as a sacred gift, as the face of Jesus.

At the building site, roofs are going up, and electricity and other items are being ticked off the project management sheets. Cadet is pleased with the progress, and once Hospital St. Francois de Sales is functioning, he looks forward to preparing for its role as a teaching hospital and center for research.

Too, he is looking forward to host-

ing medical/surgical mission trips to the hospital. “They will serve a dual purpose of providing care and teaching as well, since we are a teaching hospital,” he says. “However, the volunteers should think of the cultural aspects of health care delivery here, and also be thoughtful and respectful of the conditions the local staff is working in.”

When a medical mission trip to Haiti is done this way, Cadet says, “I can testify that the benefits are great for either party.”

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