

Jamaica Update 11.20.2013

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The Medical Relief Foundation's Jamaica Project Coordinator, Mr. David DeLucia, is an Emergency Cardiac Care (ECC) Instructor who has been a Paramedic for over 38 years. In 2003 Mr. DeLucia attended a wedding at a resort in Negril, Jamaica. While there, David noticed a Jamaica Fire Brigade (JFB) ambulance at the Negril station and he spoke with the EMTs regarding Jamaica's EMS system and its many needs. Upon learning that the JFB's ambulances did not have Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs), David promised the EMTs that he would attempt to assist with the evolution of EMS to a higher level of care.

As of 2013 Mr. DeLucia has made 10 additional visits to Jamaica, gathering information, observing operations, delivering medical equipment, and training Jamaica's EMTs. With the assistance of other MRF volunteers, the EMTs of the Jamaica Fire Brigade have received three sequential courses to insure that their rescuers had current American Heart Association certifications in CPR and AED use.

Through the Medical Relief Foundation's efforts, enabled by the generosity of many benefactors, the Jamaica Fire Brigade has received donations of training supplies, AEDs, CPR mannequins, course books, training CDs, computers, AED simulators and other materials. This has both allowed the EMTs to maintain current ECC certifications and had also left the JFB with the tools to coordinate their own Continuing Medical Education. Other EMS supplies such as adult and pediatric cervical collars, CPR masks, backboards, scene lights, suction equipment and vital signs machines have been obtained from United States and Canadian EMS partners.

Visits have been made to many of Jamaica's Accident and Emergency Departments to determine what type of equipment is needed in case appropriate donors can be found.

Most of the EMTs in Jamaica (and a dozen other Caribbean countries) are superbly trained at the University of the West Indies and the University of Technology. This gives Jamaica a valuable source of the most vital components of an effective EMS system - a source of proficient, dedicated EMTs.

In 2011 many of the EMTs and Emergency Physicians in Jamaica organized the Emergency Medical Services Association of Jamaica (EMSA-J) as a professional organization dedicated to improving EMS in Jamaica. The EMSA-J held its first all-day educational forum at The University of the West Indies on March 17, 2012. The MRF's Jamaica Project Coordinator, David DeLucia, was invited to be the keynote speaker at that forum. This gave Mr. DeLucia the opportunity to present many of the Medical Relief Foundation's suggestions and visions to an influential and relevant audience.

In October of 2012 David arrived in Jamaica one day before Hurricane Sandy directly struck the eastern portion of Jamaica, with devastating effects on agriculture. Electrical power was interrupted in 70% of the country, and four MRF volunteers taught by generator power and delivered vital equipment, lights, radios and batteries at a very challenging time.

The path ahead for Jamaica's EMS system is evolving, but reaching that goal will take a great deal of coordinated effort, dedication, and resources. Fiscal realities limit the amount of critically-needed development assistance that can be offered. Any financial, equipment or logistical contributions to assist with our efforts will make a significant impact on our efforts to assist our Jamaican friends.