

## Healing hands back from Haiti

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Hundreds and hundreds were treated during the short three days that Kankakee-area medical personnel were in Haiti, Dr. Rodney Alford, area pediatrician and internist, said Monday.

Alford and three other local doctors went to Carrefour -- the epicenter of the Jan. 12 earthquake -- as part of the Hospitals for Humanity team to give medical care after the 7.0-magnitude quake killed an estimated 150,000 people, injured about 250,000 and left about 600,000 homeless.

The roughly 30-member team set up a clinic in a large, tent-like structure being used as a church and orphanage.

"We were able to see patients in that orphanage site," Alford said. "The people were very afraid to go under any structure, any building, because of what had already happened, so we couldn't really see them in a closed building."

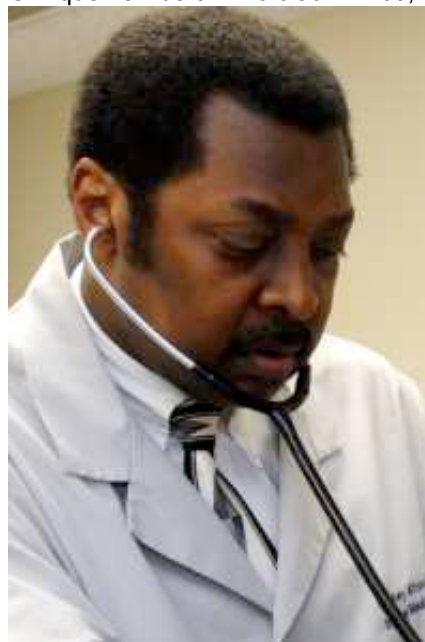
The former church building nearby was abandoned, even though it was not completely destroyed.

Through Hospitals for Humanity, Alford and Dr. Donald Roland, a Kankakee-based specialist in pain management and anesthesia; Dr. Ed Jones, a Bourbonnais-based orthopedic surgeon, and Dr. Charles Martin, a Manteno-based emergency medicine specialist with a



**Photo: The Associated Press**

Haitian volunteer orderly Bernard Clemps places injured boy Louis Valdery in a cot in an outdoor tent at the Clinique Lambert in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.



**Photo: file photo**

background in military health care, arrived in Haiti around 1 a.m. last Wednesday.

~~Photo: the photo~~  
Dr. Rodney Alford

The returned home Sunday evening.

The major medical problems Alford and the other physicians treated were large, open wounds; head traumas; stress-related headaches; asthmatic cases; and food and water contamination.

A search of the earthquake-ravaged city by Segun Ajayi, Hospitals for Humanity founder and former Kankakeean, and a reconnaissance team found a refugee camp with more than 5,000 homeless people in tents -- basically a tent city, Alford said.

'Amputations rampant'

But, there were also too many extreme cases.

"Amputations were rampant," he said. "People knew that it would be difficult to follow up a lot of these crush injuries and cuts that were really deep. It was easier to amputate it than to try to do wound care. In some respects, it was justifiable to see some of the amputations that we saw, but, again, in some cases it seemed excessive."

Alford said the number of amputations will have long-term affects on Haiti -- a country where amputation already carries a social stigma.

"There's a stigma that people have of folks that have had amputations," Alford said. "I wasn't quite sure of it all, I didn't quite understand it."

The team encountered a young woman who needed an amputation. Her foot was completely crushed, Alford said, with her tendons exposed. "She really needed to have an amputation and absolutely refused," he said. "Her mother refused, her husband or boyfriend refused."

He continued: "If you're an amputee in a community like this that's poor already, it reduces you to nothing more than a beggar because you can't get out and work, you can't get out and walk.

"You don't have the ability to purchase prosthesis. So there's a lot of folks on crutches just learning how to use crutches."

Still, despite all the many injuries and trauma Alford and the team saw, he said what impressed him most was the strength and pride of the Haitian people.

"The whole team was amazed at how resilient these folks were," Alford said. "Many of them lost their whole families, plus their homes. Some of them had homes and completely now are homeless, living in a tent made from a sheet and three or four sticks."

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