

Haitian Trainees Begin Learning about Medical Equipment



Two Haitian men are participating in a biomedical equipment training program through MediSend International in Texas that will prepare them to return to Haiti to service medical equipment that may save lives. Throughout the year, AAMI will provide updates on the trainees' experiences in Texas and after they return to Haiti to work.

Since arriving in Dallas to begin their training on Jan. 10, Luxon Philogene and Phanel Guerrier have cleared two major steps toward better understanding life-saving medical equipment, knowledge they hope to put to good use in their devastated homeland of Haiti.

The first step was the completion of an intensive English immersion course. This was important, as the biomedical equipment training these French-speaking Haitians and their classmates receive is in English.

The second step was the successful completion of a Red Cross course on first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), automatic external defibrillators (AED), and blood-borne pathogens.

Phanel says he found the Red Cross training to be particularly enlightening.

"Before, [in Haiti] when I would see someone lying on the ground, perhaps having a heart attack, I would have to just stand by and do nothing. Now I can really help. I know what to do.

"One thing we cannot do in Haiti is call 911. There is no such thing there."

Luxon says the Red Cross training will be useful for developing a disaster plan, adding that he wished he had the information a year ago during the earthquake in Haiti and the ensuing disorder.

These initial steps paved the way for Luxon and Phanel to begin Dallas-based MediSend International's Biomedical Repair Training Program. Along with their classmates from around the world, Luxon and Phanel are learning to install, calibrate, operate, maintain, and troubleshoot sophisticated devices and instrumentation, which are critical for effective delivery of healthcare. They're also learning proper installation, operation, and

repair, as well as preventive and safety inspections to ensure that biomedical equipment meets U.S. and international safety standards.

Bleak Conditions Continue

Sadly, the conditions in Haiti and the level of poverty are even worse than one might imagine. Hospital staffs are attempting to function with the barest of necessities, and with a lack of skilled technicians to help.

But Phanel and Luxon are both committed to learning as much as they can before returning to their respective Haitian hospitals this summer. Although they had been working at hospitals in Haiti before arriving at MediSend, they lacked the training, skills, and tools needed to maximize their effectiveness at their facilities.

After completing the full biomedical equipment training program, Luxon will return to International Child Care's Grace Children's Hospital, while Phanel will return to his hospital in Cange, called Zamni Lasante—a Partners in Health Hospital.

New Experiences

Having never ventured outside of Haiti until this training, the men were surprised to meet classmates from such far-flung places as Nigeria, Togo, and Papua New Guinea. But they've enjoyed working collaboratively and learning with their new friends.

The trainees have been learning through a computer-assisted training system that the U.S. military uses to provide instruction in electronics. They've also begun working with electricity and soldering, and their confidence is growing daily.

Thanks to difficult weather conditions in the Dallas area and the frenetic pace of the program, Luxon says there has been precious little time to experience American culture and fun activities

outside of the classroom. But that time will come. For now, the trainees are focused on learning as much as they can so they can return home and help relieve the suffering of their fellow Haitians. ■

Next month, we'll discuss the trainees' initial exposure to American culture, and their further exploration of medical instrumentation.



Phanel Guerrier, left, and Luxon Philogene work on circuit boards during MediSend's Biomedical Repair Training Program.

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