

## **Every Year Nurse Practitioner Students, Faculty, and Alumni Volunteer in Haiti**

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Every October a team of nurse practitioner students, faculty, and practicing clinicians from around Baltimore travels south to Leon, Haiti to provide primary healthcare services. Volunteers experience both the challenges and joys unique to volunteering in a developing nation. This has been a fifteen year tradition and ongoing. The Hopkins team delivers healthcare in clinics and temporary medical tents in communities yet to fully recover from the devastating 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck the country in 2010. Dr. Elizabeth Sloand, a pediatric nurse practitioner and faculty member from JHU School of Nursing (SON) leads this team each year. Other members of the team this year were two Hopkins alumni nurse practitioners, an orthopedic surgeon, six JHU nurse practitioner students, and a SON liaison. Over the course of the week they were there, approximately 150-200 patients were cared for each day, ranging from common to rare conditions, and using a formulary of less than forty drugs and basic medical supplies. They even performed minor procedures and wound care under the illumination of headlamps as daylight faded. The volunteers assess, diagnose, and created management plans for patients, from newborns to the elderly doing a lot with the little they have. Often patients have minimal or no access to specialized care, requiring a several hours journey on foot to the nearest hospital. The team diagnosed and treated a wide range of acute and chronic conditions such as parasitic infestations, malaria, pneumonia, hypertension, injuries and lots of musculoskeletal complaints due to the physical demands of life in Haiti. The Hopkins team adapts to the lack of resources in Leon, doing what they can to help arrange transportation for their sickest patients, or helping expedite care. Nurse practitioner students enjoy this amazing

experience of volunteering in Haiti alongside supportive faculty, local staff and translators, and learning with and from their peers. Students come away from this opportunity appreciating the role of providing services to communities lacking access to healthcare and basic needs. For many of the volunteers this trip strengthens their desire to work with underserved populations. As a result of their efforts patients are more empowered in managing their acute and chronic conditions. This trip calls on the team to be adaptive, creative, and to tap into optimism when facing challenging circumstances— universally valuable skills and enormously translatable to clinical settings both at home and abroad.

This year a few nursing students and nurse practitioner students also volunteered in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and as far as Burundi, Southeast Africa to name just a few of their far-reaching international footprints.

If you have any questions regarding the Haiti trip, please contact Elizabeth Sloand, PhD, RN, PNP-BC, FAAN at [esloand1@jhu.edu](mailto:esloand1@jhu.edu) .