



In late October, one of our very own clinical engineering technologists, Patrick Clarke, went on a special trip: he joined a volunteer task force made up of nurses, physicians, and other healthcare professionals from Newfoundland committed to delivering and improving healthcare in Haiti by getting involved with Team [Broken Earth](#). ACCES was glad to offer some financial support in the form of a \$300 donation for Patrick and his volunteer group's mission, which he was glad to share with us once he got back "...

a little tired but a better person for having been there

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A non-profit Canadian organization, Team Broken Earth started in 2010 through the work of Dr. Andrew Fury as an immediate response to the dire need of medical services in Haiti following the January 12th earthquake that dealt the country a mortal blow. Since then, volunteer task forces have grown to include multidisciplinary healthcare teams from across Canada, totalling nearly 200 volunteers on the ground during regular missions to Haiti.

Patrick begins his story with a little background information: *“I have been a Biomedical/Clinical Engineering Technologist for 27 years but I have been preparing for my role in Haiti my entire life. Born in a small rural Newfoundland community, Little St. Lawrence, life was all about making things work. Necessity is the mother of all invention. Putting together bicycles from parts gathered here and there, keeping my mother’s clothes dryer going (“You know I bought that the year you were born!”), meant trips to our local dump sifting through the remains of disposed models. Helping people was expected, appreciated and rewarding in ways beyond measure.”*

As the sole clinical engineering technologist in his volunteer group, Patrick's primary responsibility with Team Broken Earth was to support the one week mission in Port Au Prince by making sure that electro-medical and technological components required to assist medical procedures in the hospital were available and in working condition: *“...respiratory devices (LTV Series, Bipap, compressors), anaesthesia devices (Aestiva and Modulus SE with 7900 Vent), Sterilizers (Tuttnauer, Steris), patient monitoring devices (GEDatex, Philips, etc.), infusion and syringe pumps, pulse oximetry devices, UPS devices... sound familiar!”*

Now think back 30 years until today: that is the collection of devices found in the Haitian healthcare system. Most items there were donated after the earthquake, usable but sometimes requiring using two devices to make one work. *“The first time I was [in Haiti], I repaired a mobile*

CT that was set-up in a semi-trailer... that's when the owners of the hospital offered me the key to Haiti and an invitation to return anytime!"

As part of this mission, Patrick also had the responsibility of providing local staff with means to manage the medical technology assets they currently have, and to plan for future needs. Since this was his second visit with Team Broken Earth, he was able to hit the ground running: he knew the basic layout, was already acquainted with some of the medical and support staff, he had been made aware of some items of concern with electro-medical devices before the trip started, and he even had some spare parts with him. He also got to use his photography hobby during his trip, which helped us better understand and appreciate his story, and the trying conditions he was able to work under and excel in.

However, life has a way of throwing curveballs at us, especially in such conditions as those Patrick was headed to when he left the comfort of Newfoundland in late October: *"We arrived in Port Au Pince late Saturday night after catching the 5:00 am flight out of St. John's [...] First thing Sunday morning, Dr. Fury raps on my door: he had just learned that the three sterilizers in the hospital were not working! We had no sterile instruments, meaning that no operations could take place. But performing operations was one of the primary reasons for this trip; it was the first time a neurosurgeon was with the mission. New plan [...] As Edy Paul, the local technical guru, and I were scouring the junkyard for a switch to repair an autoclave, I handed him two rocks to break the wires apart. Edy turned to me and said, "You're Haitian!" - A compliment I will take with me forever."*

His week in Haiti flew by, and no sooner had Patrick gotten back from the mission, he was receiving kind words and thank you letters from colleagues and Broken Earth Team members, including Dr. Fury himself: *"Caring, compassion, and commitment to the team and to patient care are the core of Broken Earth. You exemplify what it means to be part of the Team Broken Earth family [...] I hope you consider coming along on future trips. Haiti is a little better today because of you."*

Now, ACCES did not get a statement from Patrick communicating his desire or willingness to return to Haiti on another mission, *"[...] I continue to keep in touch with the staff of HBM to consult for equipment needs and I also monitor the system here in Canada fishing for potential gems for the Haitian system."*

"As more and more Broken Earth missions are forming across the country, I think Patrick's story makes it abundantly clear that Clinical engineering's participation within these volunteer groups is becoming "instrumental" (no pun intended)!

ACCES Supports Help for Haiti

Written by Natalie Boudreau
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