

Global Health Day

Haiti Project Mission: Eliminate Avoidable Blindness in Haiti

William Myers, Nicholas Volp

FOCUS's long range mission is to Eliminate Avoidable Blindness in Haiti. We intend to do this by developing a stronger sustainable residency affiliated with HUEH, using Grace Hospital for private and some government public care. We will work with established NGOs and the private Grace Hospital, as they are on the ground in Port au Prince, with connections to the local medical community and government. Dr. Mike Maingrette intends to become full time in education, surgery, and clinic supervision. He is one of only a handful of skilled surgical ophthalmologists proficient in manual small incision cataract surgery (MSICS) and phacoemulsification, as well as having expertise in glaucoma, another major cause of blindness in Haiti. We established a stronger residency facility with video linkages for new slit lamps and microscopes for virtual consultations, and a senior surgical rotation at VisionPlus in Cap Haitian with Dr. Luc Dupuy Pierre.

FOCUS has organized a full ophthalmology didactic curriculum that cycles over 2 years using Skype and Zoom lectures by volunteer francophone attendings in Haiti, US, Canada, and the EU. In 2019, FOCUS opened the first wet lab for residents ever in Haiti. The Haitian residents have spent many hours there each week, improving their skills greatly, per reports from Drs. Maingrette and Dupuy. It has provided an opportunity to continue developing surgical skills despite COVID-19 shutdowns of some clinics and surgery. Dr. Myers sits on the Board of FOCUS, founded in the 1960's for eye care in Haiti. FOCUS partnered with the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS) Foundation, SEE International, and university fellowship programs, to improve teaching at the sole eye residency at HUEH, the main Haitian government hospital. Dr. Myers trained at Aravind Eye Hospitals in India in manual, small incision cataract surgery (MSICS). He devised a webinar titled Learning MSICS with the senior leadership of Aravind for training younger doctors in MSICS. He additionally was educated in development of community outreach with Aravind's LAICO. Dr. Myers expects to be present in Haiti for several months annually, coordinating with the multiple entities, attending residents' MSICS cases at HUEH, and providing additional surgical training to postgraduate surgeons. The residents would attend didactics, observe and perform surgery, and be trained on newer diagnostic equipment. Dr. Nicholas Volpe has been active in residency education and cataract surgery teaching as Chair of Ophthalmology at Northwestern, providing him with a unique expertise in developing a residency education program. Dr. Volpe has also collaborated with the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO) efforts to improve residency education across the globe. The Buffett Seed Grant will facilitate travel to Haiti to strengthen the current relationships with our Haitian and NGO partners. We look forward to reporting on the progress at future events.

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