Help for Haitian dentists still lacking, HDA president says

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DT Latin America

PUERTO VALLARTA, Mexico: The President of the Haiti Dental Association (HDA), Dr Samuel Prophete, told Dental Tribune Latin America that people are working again and that his country has begun functioning to some extent, but that large tent cities remain, posing great sanitation and security problems.

Dr Prophete participated in the conference held as part of the A Smile for Haiti initiative of the Ibero-Latin American Dental Federation thanks to a grant from the International Congress of Oral Implantologists and specifically to the efforts of its Latin American Director, Dr Alvaro Ordóñez from Miami.

Two months after DT Latin America brought Dr Prophete to the Chicago Midwinter Meeting for talks with the Chicago Dental Society and American Dental Association officials on ways to help Haitian dentists, little aid has trickled down to the Haitian dental community. Asked about the reaction of his colleagues to the campaign for Haitian dentists, he said that after the trip to Chicago he called a meeting to explain the commitments to help made by American dental organisations. “I told them, ‘I cross my fingers and wait for the resources to come’, but for the time being I’m selling hope to them.”

Dr Prophete said his association will use the initial aid received to help the 12 dentists most affected by the earthquake, the ones who lost everything, of the 35 dentists in need of help.

“Haitian dentists have partnered to work together with the ones who have lost their practices,” Dr Prophete said. “This has allowed dentists to survive, but they are still waiting” for aid from several dental organisations and other sources in the dental industry.

Looters ransacked dental offices after the earthquake, leaving many professionals without tools or materials. While institutions such as New York University College of Dentistry have donated dental chairs that are being shipped to Haiti by Henry Schein, Dr Prophete said that more immediate help could be obtained by purchasing equipment or materials from Haitian dental pools for Haitian dentists.

Dr Prophete pointed out that this is an important way for dentists to gain supplies to tend to their patients’ needs and it keeps the economy moving forward for Haitians. There is a real concern that dentists who cannot work in Haiti will migrate, leaving a country with already very low rates of dental services in an even worse situation.

Donations
If you want to send donations to your colleagues in Haiti please use the following bank details:

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11 Penn Plaza, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10001, USA
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For donations in kind, such as used dental equipment, please contact Dr Samuel Prophete at samprophete@gmail.com.

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Haiti supporters gather in Mexico. (DTI/Photo Javier M. de Pisón)