

Physical Therapists Continue to Transform Lives in Haiti

Although the need for rehabilitative services in Haiti existed long before the devastating earthquake hit the nation in January 2010, the earthquake elevated awareness and need for physical therapy services.

According to the CIA World Fact Book, Haiti has a population of over 9.7 million residents. Yet, until recently physical therapy services were virtually non-existent. A few physical therapists and health care groups have set out to change this.

“Just 10 years ago, physical therapy services in Haiti were virtually non-existent. Today, the need for physical therapy remains high.”

Approximately ten years ago, Greg Bennett, PT, DSc, MS, owner of [Excel Physical Therapy](#) and medical mission coordinator for orthopedic and rehabilitation services for the [Community Coalition for Haiti](#), was contacted by some friends in the medical profession who mentioned physical therapy services were desperately needed in Haiti. The Haitian culture often views physical disabilities as a curse and individuals with disabilities were often shunned by other Haitians. This inspired Bennett to visit Haiti. During his first trip, Bennett did patient evaluations and assessments and realized physical therapists had a huge opportunity to make a difference in the lives of Haitians. His visits to Haiti grew from week-long visits throughout the year to the opening of permanent physical therapy clinics located in Pignon and Jacmel, Haiti.

Permanent Physical Therapy Clinics Meet On-going Needs

Opening a new physical therapy clinic in the United States is challenging enough. Imagine, doing so in Haiti. On top of determining the type of equipment, staff and materials needed to run a clinic, physical therapists face the frustration of trying to get essential equipment through customs and delivered to locations where roads at times are tough to navigate. Electricity is scarcely available. Potable water is rare. Despite the hurdles, the ability to transform the lives of Haitians has inspired physical therapists like Bennett to persevere.

Haiti Physical Therapy Resources

The need for trained physical therapists in Haiti remains high. A number of organizations are constantly on the lookout for physical therapists

“There are ample opportunities to make a difference in Haiti”

interested in making a difference in Haiti.

The Rehab Clinic of Jacmel is frequently looking for physical therapists to volunteer their time and energy in Haiti. To find out more about volunteering at this clinic visit the Community Coalition for Haiti (cchaiti.org) or the PT Help for Haiti website (pthelpforhaiti.org).

The Global Therapy Group also has a permanent clinic in the works. They are seeking volunteers to work at the clinic throughout the year. Find more details at globaltherapygroup.org. You'll also find additional ways you can help on the APTA website (apta.org/Haiti).

If you're interested in volunteering in Haiti, there are a few things you'll need before you go. A passport is required and in some cases a Visa. Vaccinations are also required. The CDC website (cdc.gov) offers a full list of recommended vaccinations. You should plan on getting vaccinations at least 6 weeks prior to the date you attend to leave. Many of the volunteer organizations like the Community Coalition for Haiti supply volunteers with housing, insurance and travel assistance.

To learn more about making a difference in Haiti listen to two podcasts on the topic. One featuring Greg Bennett, PT, medical mission's coordinator for orthopedic and rehabilitation services for the Community Coalition for Haiti, and Donna Hutchinson, PT and cofounder of Global Therapy Group at PTTalker.com.



About the Author

After helping design and market the first preventative knee brace for football players as an Athletic Trainer at Iowa State University in the late 1970's, Jeff has made physical therapy equipment his passion since 1986. He launched Advantage Medical in 1994 with a commitment to help Physical Therapists and rehab professionals improve clinical outcomes as well as save time and costs through pioneering, creative solutions. Jeff's entrepreneurial approach keeps Advantage Medical and its clients at the forefront of innovations and best practices in the PT industry.

Jeff was also one of four original founders of the National Medical Alliance in 1988 which later changed its name to Motion1. He served as the Chief Operating Officer for 10 years and was instrumental in its growth and reputation as a leading supplier to independent rehabilitation distributors across the country. He is also the host of the long running podcast "PT Talker" featuring a physical therapy expert for listeners every week. Subscribe to the free, informative broadcast designed to help therapists grow their business at www.PTTalker.com

About Advantage Medical

Advantage Medical was established in 1994 to meet the growing needs of rehab professionals in a variety of medical disciplines. Advantage Medical has become a leading provider of expert advice as well as quality therapy equipment and supplies, offering innovative solutions to challenges faced by physical therapists, clinic directors, chiropractors, athlete trainers and other medical professionals.

In October of 2010, Advantage Medical joined the family of Scrip Companies of Bolingbrook, IL as an operating division. Now with access to a wider variety of products and large scale purchasing power, Advantage Medical is poised to raise the level of value we bring to our clients. Scrip Companies serves markets in massage therapy, chiropractic, spa and now physical therapy.

About PT Talker

Stay up-to-date on the latest industry trends and news by connecting with a community of your fellow experts. Advantage Medical's PT Talker is the online resource for business news and ideas for physical therapists. Our podcasts, blog and newsletters keep you informed with new ways to help grow your business, save time, provide improved clinical outcomes or lower costs. Review updates on the newest equipment and products, find tips and techniques for improved patient outcomes, and hear from other clinics about their best business practices. You'll find everything you need to stay ahead of the curve in physical therapy at PTTalker.com.