

## **MEDICAL MISSIONS TO MEDOR, HAITI**

Since 2008, several members of the Haiti Committee have used their medical backgrounds to lead medical missions to Medor. On some trips, doctors and nurses from other states have joined the delegations to bring their much-needed services at no charge to the people of Medor. Healthcare is a scarce commodity in this sprawling 74-square mile parish. A parish clinic is run by one of the Sisters of St. Therese who is also a nurse. The clinic is small and charges patients fees to cover costs for staff, supplies, and medications. However, many in Medor are too poor even to afford these basic services, so they forego medical care unless it is a dire emergency.

Mothers mostly deliver their babies at home and rely on relatives or poorly trained laypeople to help them. Poor sanitation and lack of training in sterile techniques result in a high infant mortality rate. Also, due to lack of clean water, parasites and worms take hold in the intestinal tracts of many children, resulting in the swollen abdomens one commonly sees in photos of children in the developing world. Many easily treated or preventable conditions become full-blown crises. In emergencies too grave for the tiny clinics, patients have to be transported to hospitals that are days away by foot (Medor is not connected to other communities by roads).

Heidi Sampang, MD, a pediatrician, along with one nurse and three auxiliary helpers, led the first medical mission in March 2008. Mothers and fathers with children stood in line, sometimes overnight, to be seen by a doctor—many for the first time in their lives. Over the course of four days, the team saw 825 patients.

By December 2010, OLQP had teamed up with the late Stan Brock, the past leader of Remote Area Medical (RAM) (<https://ramusa.org>), to take a medical team to Medor. The people of Medor especially needed medical care at this time, given the cholera crisis after the big earthquake of 2010. The delegation also staffed a dental clinic and an eye clinic, taught classes on sanitation, and distributed rehydration packets. While in Medor, Stan Brock organized a team to build an airstrip in hopes of providing emergency air service to the people of Medor. These efforts were chronicled in a segment on NBC's DATELINE, hosted by Ann Curry, called "Rescue in the Mountains."

The next medical mission occurred in November 2012. This time, Dr. Heidi Sampang teamed up with surgeon Dr. Brendan McCracken, who was also (at the time) a parishioner at OLQP. What was supposed to be another pediatric-only mission turned into four days of seeing 718 patients of all ages. Remarkably, during this visit, Dr. McCracken performed an amputation. He removed the hand of a teen who had been badly burned in the aftermath of the earthquake and was living in excruciating pain. The amputation was performed at the closest hospital, a one-day walk from Medor, in St. Marc. The surgery was successful, and the patient remains pain free.

Another successful mission occurred in November 2014. Collectively, a surgeon, a neurologist, a pediatrician, two ophthalmologists, and a gynecologist helped over 1,200 patients. The gynecologist screened women for cervical cancer and taught five local health care workers how to perform the screening as well. Three nurses and two auxiliary helpers joined the team.

The most recent medical mission was in October 2016. Three doctors and four nurses helped 989 patients.

All who have joined to help with these missions have developed a deep love for the people of Medor. To be able to decrease the suffering of the sick, in even the smallest way, leaves an indelible mark on our faith journeys. More importantly, all who participate show solidarity with the people of Medor, and in return, the people of Medor shower everyone with their prayers and gratitude. All who participate have been deeply moved by their experiences.

The medical staff and other delegates have all paid their own way. In addition, foundations have given us pharmaceuticals for the missions, or provided them at the lowest cost possible. The medical teams also owe great thanks to OLQP parishioners who donate most of the over-the-counter medicines and perform work parties, kombits, to pack them in packages by dosage. Big hearts can do great things!

Foundations that have contributed resources to the medical missions:

**Brothers Brother Foundation** ([www.brothersbrother.org](http://www.brothersbrother.org))

1200 Galveston Avenue,  
Pittsburgh, PA 15233  
412-321-3160

2730 Prosperity Avenue,  
Suite #110, Dock #5  
Fairfax, VA 22031  
703-992-9210

**Catholic Medical Mission Board Inc.** (<https://cmmb.org/>)

1110 Vermont Ave NW # 1000, Washington, DC 20005  
Phone: (202) 530-4742

**Blessings International** (<https://www.blessing.org/>)

1650 N. Indianwood Avenue  
Broken Arrow, OK 74012

**Call or Fax:**

P: (918) 250-8101

F: (918) 250-1281



People wait to see physicians at a medical mission clinic in 2016.



Nurse practitioner Lori Clements prepares a patient for her antibiotic injection during the medical mission in 2016.





Pediatrician Dr. Heidi Sampang examines a child during the medical mission in 2014.



As school children watch through windows, ophthalmologist Dr. Sue Carlson examines a patient at one of the nine vision clinics run in Medor.