Haiti - From a post earthquake visit of one month to a collaboration of five years. Building a rehabilitation center for SCI patients.

Sibille Bühlmann
sibille.buehlmann@paranet.ch
Swiss Paraplegic Center - some Figures

• One of the leading Rehabilitation Centers for SCI patients in Europe
• Committed to improve quality of life for disabled and spinal cord injured people all over the world
• 6 patients’ wards, 140 beds
• 10 ICU beds
• Outpatient care unit for lifelong treatment of our patients
• About 1000 employees with over 35 nationalities
Haiti Hospital Appeal - some Figures

- English NGO which has been working in Northern Haiti since 2006
- Community Health Center built in 2007
- Was thought to start as a Pediatric and Maternity Clinic in fall 2010
- After the earthquake agreed to function as one of the first SCI rehabilitation units with 22 patients, as of which 21 have been rehabilitated successfully and 17 have been discharged back to Port-au-Prince
June 2010 - Barriers

• All patients had large grade 3-5 pressure sores
• Therapy was usually done in bed and mostly passive
• The therapists had little to no basic medical knowledge
• Every patient had a wheelchair, however, these were not adapted for each patient individually
• There was only little mobilization time in the wheelchair
• No-one involved in the rehabilitation center had wheelchair handling skills
June 2010 - Chances

- A local physiatrist was regularly on site three days a week
- All staff were willing and motivated to learn from our team
- By the end of the month, all patients were mobilized into their wheelchairs daily
- Therapies were done to fit the actual needs of the patient
- The wheelchairs were as adapted as well as possible to each individuals’ needs
- The word of the rehabilitation clinic had spread and two non-earthquake SCI patients were admitted
Milestones

• Infrastructure of the Rehabilitation Unit and its funding

• Multidisciplinary Rehabilitation
  • Different Phases of Rehabilitation in a developing country
  • Support through Swiss SCI professionals
  • Teaching and defining tasks for Haitian health professionals

• Discharge of the patients into their familiar environment, including leisure and sports
Infrastructure of the Rehabilitation Unit and its Funding

• Infrastructure
  • Two In-Patient rooms to fit a maximum of 12 patients
  • PT and Exercise room
  • OT room including facilities to practice activities of daily living and enough space for vocational therapy such as sewing and wheelchair mechanics
  • Teaching room
  • Office and storage space for nurses

• Funding
  • Funding through Swiss Paraplegic Foundation, Healing Hands for Haiti, UN and Konbit Sante
  • Opening of the Rehabilitation Center in Fall 2011
New Rehab Clinic - June 2011
Multidisciplinary Rehabilitation

• Different Phases of Rehabilitation in a developing country
  • Access to early acute treatment such as spinal surgery in the clinic or in collaboration with other hospitals nearby
  • Rehabilitation in a specialized facility
  • Planning the discharge of the patients into their known environment (housing, work, leisure)
Multidisciplinary Rehabilitation

• Support through Swiss SCI professionals
  • Team consisting of PT/ OT/ nurse/ P&R specialist, one of which has been to Haiti on a visit before
  • Visits of one month twice a year
  • One hour of education, SCI based, every day
  • European volunteers who do not work at SPC spend one week of training in Nottwil before going to HHA
• Defining assessments (ASIA, SCIM) and documentation methods together with other SCI rehabs in Haiti (Haitian SCI data base)
Multidisciplinary Rehabilitation

- Teaching and defining tasks for Haitian health professionals
  - Rehab specialist as head of Rehab department in Haiti in charge of organization and coordination of staff and volunteers as well as coordinator between SCI centers in Haiti
  - Head of each department defined (nursing / therapy / medical)
  - Teaching material will be prepared by the Swiss team in French
  - During the Swiss teams’ stay, one hour of SCI specific teaching will be done every day
  - Inviting Haitian staff (nurse / doctor / pt) to Switzerland before the Swiss team comes back to Haiti, follow up
Discharge of the patients into their familiar environment

- Education of the community about disability and accessibility
- Housing and building for people in wheelchairs
- Job perspectives (mechanics/IT) for disabled in Haiti
The future?

• Integration of the disabled into the Haitian society
• General education on disability in the country
• Building a multi-purpose sports site next to the rehabilitation building which can be used for wheelchair sports as well as by the community
Olympic dream 2012....