

Earthquake Rattles Nepal with Many Casualties

Nepal Orthopedic Hospital Still Standing

By Stephen Miller, DPM

An 7.9 magnitude earthquake devastated the Kathmandu Valley on April 25, 2015 and was followed by many aftershocks as well as a very demoralizing second earthquake on May 12 measuring 7.3. The death toll exceeded 10,000 and scores more needed urgent orthopedic care, most with no way to pay for such services. Unfortunately, there are less than 200 trained orthopedic surgeons in Nepal -- a country of nearly 29 million people. Nepal is also one of the poorest countries in the world. The earthquake that has devastated so much of the Kathmandu Valley is one of the largest in decades.



Nepal Orthopedic Hospital (NOH) in Kathmandu (Jorpati) is a nonprofit specialty hospital, built with the help of over 110 Rotary Clubs in the US (including District 5050), Canada, Belgium, France and the Netherlands, and has regularly dedicated 25% of its services to charitable care of the poor since its opening in 1998. It is one of the few Nepalese hospitals providing contemporary orthopedic care and after this earthquake it is one of the few institutions largely intact and functioning.



Canadian forces bring hospital tent

Fidalgo Island Rotary Club member, Dr. Steve Miller, has been taking surgical mission teams to NOH annually since 2008, bringing specialized expertise and much-needed equipment, implants and supplies that have helped make the hospital self-sufficient for its daily operations. “There are 8 talented and skilled orthopedic surgeons on staff at NOH,” said Dr. Miller, “and they have been working tirelessly treating and surgically repairing earthquake victims since it struck on April 25th. They have been doing an amazing job...all provided at no cost to the patients.”



Hospital tent

Daily reports from the hospital Medical Director, Dr. Saju Pradhan, himself one of the surgeons, described the injuries and chaos they were dealing with from day one. The hospital compound was full of victims and families, beds, stretchers, tents, treatment stations and medical staff. No one could safely stay in the hospital. As the aftershocks subsided, they gradually filled the 100 hospital beds with patients recovering from surgery and those waiting for surgery.



Caring for the old and needy

The system was overwhelmed. Some supplies are getting in to the hospital, which is managed to provide two meals a day to the people under their care. Water was from an on-site well and available because of a new diesel generator purchased by Rotary Clubs last year.

Although many NGO's stopped in to provide various amounts of assistance, the hospital pretty much needed cash to cover costs as they provided care to all earthquake victims free of charge. A rough accounting of expenses for the month after the earthquake totaled \$116,492 USD. During that month, the staff evaluated and treated 3,609 patients and provided orthopedic surgery to 307 earthquake victims and 23 regular patients.



OR in Space

The hospital is gradually re-establishing business back in the building, capitalizing on the opportunity to re-paint and repair and remodel so it can be even more efficient. There are still many victims showing up from distant places and much follow-up care is necessary.

So far, our **Fidalgo Island Rotary Club** has raised and/or received from other donor organizations over \$47,867. We have securely wired \$18,000 to the hospital and using some \$16,000 to purchase a much-needed sterilizer autoclave as they blew one during earthquake aftermath. We will continue to wire cash donations to the hospital as they accumulate. The hospital administration has been very transparent in providing receipts, reports, statistics and spreadsheets on their use of funds donated. We are also using some of the funds to respond to special needs requests from the hospital using a Global Matching Grant. We have just had approved the funding of a new 4-door, 4WD pick-up truck for the hospital so they can continue to take much needed medical supplies, sanitary kits and medical/surgical care to the often-forgotten villages. They have already visited over 10 villages. That truck will arrive soon at the hospital.



Anesthesia in a tent



Ready for tent surgery



Operating in a tent