Haiti receives further support at Midwinter Meeting

Dental coalition agrees on measures to help victims of quake disaster

CHICAGO/MIAMI, USA: The president of the Haitian Dental Society, Dr Samuel Prophet, has asked US dental associations and professionals for support to rebuild the public health system of his country and to give help to colleagues whose offices have been destroyed. Dr Prophet, who was invited by the Chicago Dental Society to join this year’s Midwinter Meeting, spoke at the opening session of the Chicago Midwinter Meeting as part of an initiative of Dental Tribune Latin America to help colleagues in Haiti following the 12 January earthquake.

“The people of Haiti will forever be grateful to the international dental community for the aid received in shelters and makeshift refugee centres in the form of hygiene kits with toothbrushes, toothpaste and soap, and for the volunteer dentists who have gone to help, along with their Haitian colleagues, to bring assistance to the needy,” said Dr Prophet. He added that this tragedy would also give the opportunity to honour its victims by assisting in the mammoth task of rebuilding Haiti.

Officers of the American Dental Association (ADA) also held a meeting requested by Dental Tribune Latin America to seek solutions to the crisis in Haiti, specifically to help colleagues who have lost family members, offices and their means of work. At the ADA headquarters in Chicago, ADA President Dr Ronald L. Tankersley, President-elect Dr Raymond Gist, Executive Director Dr Kathleen T. O’Loughlin and Director of the Division of Global Affairs welcomed an international delegation that included Dr Prophet, Dr Adolfo Rodríguez, President of the Latin American Dental Federation (FOLA), Dr Adán Yáñez, President of the Ibero-Latin American Dental Federation (FDILA), Torsten Oemus, President of Dental Tribune International, and Javier de Pison, editor of Dental Tribune Latin America.

The group discussed different ways to help Haiti, such as the Oral Health Coalition for Haiti and other initiatives like conferences at various congresses in Latin America and the USA, a programme called Adopt a Dentist, and collaboration with companies for the donation of materials, instruments and dental units.

Dr Yáñez offered to devote one day of the FDILA congress, to be held from 12 to 16 May 2010 in Puerto Vallarta in Mexico, to Haiti. On this day, which will be entitled A Smile for Haiti, prominent Latin American speakers will donate their lecture fees. Amongst the confirmed speakers are Drs Miguel Asenjo (Dominican Republic), Sergio Kohan (Argentina) and Enrique Jadad (Colombia). In addition, the FDILA will host a gala dinner to raise funds and is offering discounts to commercial exhibitors who sponsor events or donate materials to Haiti.

As assistance, A Smile for Haiti will be broadcast live through the Dental Tribune Study Club (DTSC), an online educational platform. This initiative will enable dentists in Latin America who wish to help to sign in and view the presentations by renowned specialists. The nominal fee charged for signing in will be donated to a fund for Haiti. A week prior to the Mexico event, the DTSC will present a series by English-language speakers with the same purpose.

(Edited by Daniel Zimmermann, DTI)