

# Red Deer Advocate

## Horizon Family Medicine helping clinic in Haiti



*Red Deer physician Dr. Mandy Hyde (middle) meets with a Haitian patient in early February when she and a team of others from Horizon Family Medicine travelled to the Caribbean nation to work for a week at a local medical clinic.*

By [Myles Fish - Red Deer Advocate](#)

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Even before the 2010 earthquake that devastated much of the country, Haiti was the poorest nation in the Americas. When the quake hit in January four years ago, killing tens of thousands and leaving many more in need of urgent care, the lack of appropriate medical resources was made all too clear.

Four years later the country remains remarkably poor, much still needs to be rebuilt, and most Haitians are at a high risk of contracting major infectious diseases.

But the chance to rebuild post-earthquake has also provided a great opportunity, an opportunity exemplified at the Haiti ARISE compound in Grand-Goâve, a town of 60,000 two hours west of the capital Port-au-Prince.

The majority of buildings in Grand-Goâve were destroyed in the earthquake, including a few structures at the compound of the faith-based humanitarian organization.

After the quake, not only were buildings on the compound rebuilt, a new one was built — a medical clinic.

For the last year, that clinic has received financial support from Horizon Family Medicine, based in Red Deer and Sylvan Lake.

Earlier this month, a team of six from the local clinics spent a week at the Haiti clinic seeing patients and learning where their support is most needed moving forward.

Diabetes, hypertension and eye troubles were common issues the medical team's four physicians saw at the clinic. Many of the Haitians lacked regular access to a physician, and specialists were often hours away in the capital.

Dr. Ray Comeau has done medical trips to many countries through A Better World Canada, but said the situation in Haiti remains very poor.

Oddly, it was when an injured Canadian on the trip needed an X-ray that the lack of medical infrastructure in the country was most evident to Comeau.

“They really tried to get us through fast and help us, but that machine they had there came out of Noah's Ark. It was really really something old. They do amazing things with what they've got, but it's a pretty sad situation.

“And it's also sad that so much money has been poured into Haiti and there's so little to show for it,” he said.

The clinic at the Haiti ARISE compound lacked an on-site lab other diagnostic tools, something Dr. Mandy Hyde said hampers the health of those who may have to travel far away to determine whether they have an infectious disease.

The humanitarian organization also runs a primary school, bible college and trade school for the community.

The trade school is seen as a particularly important piece of the charity's efforts, as for much of the rebuilding work in the country, Comeau said, Dominicans have been brought in simply because Haitians have not had the necessary skills.

“In order to improve the health of that community, you need to get people out of poverty. In order for them to get out of poverty, they need to have jobs.

“So I think their vision is good; they're trying to improve people's lives that way,” said Hyde.

While no further trips have yet been planned, ongoing financial support from Horizon funds a physician and pharmacist at the clinic three days per week.

Other medical personnel on the Haiti trip were Dr. Chauntille Munchinsky, Dr. Marci Wilson and pharmacy technician Denise Hubert. Horizon business manager Martin Penninga also made the trip.