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"Wound Care Kit" developed by Real Medicine Foundation Doctor Saves Lives in Pakistan

LOS ANGELES - Real Medicine Foundation Pakistan Team member, Giorgio Pietramaggiore, MD, has developed a wound care kit which is saving the lives and limbs of Pakistan earthquake survivors.

After the Oct. 8, 2005 earthquake caused massive loss of life and destruction, Boston-based surgeon Giorgio Pietramaggiore, MD, a doctor at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Ph.D. candidate at the University of Padova in collaboration with Harvard Medical School, traveled to Pakistan to volunteer with the Real Medicine team at a camp in Jabri. The camp serves as the only medical care available to 20,000 survivors in one of the hardest hit areas of Pakistan.

While working with the team to treat numerous cases of respiratory infection, pneumonia and unhealed wounds, Pietramaggiore noticed an important gap in care that his training as a plastic and reconstructive surgeon emphasized: proper wound care. He found that many of the patients he was seeing had unhealed, infected wounds from injuries they suffered in the earthquake. These serious infections can lead to the need for limb amputation and can, ultimately, cause death.

Due to the harsh conditions including a lack of running or hot water, patients had previously been unable to properly care for these wounds on their own.

In response to this dire need, Pietramaggiore developed a "wound care kit" for patient use consisting of an antibacterial gel soap (which does not require water for use), sterile saline solution, bandages, gauze, tape, disposable gloves and simple to understand pictorial instructions.

Pietramaggiore commented, "It is difficult from the comfort of our homes to imagine how hard it is trying to survive after having lost everything during the winter in a small cold tent. It is hard to imagine what it means to be sick and abandoned in the middle of the mountains. Now, I really know how big and important the impact we can all have for the needy, how every one of us can change the world."

Each kit only costs \$1.00, is easy to use, and family members, who must travel long distances on foot in bitter conditions, can easily transport them to loved ones in need.

The need for wound care kits is expected to grow as survivors face harsh winter conditions and must find ways to care for family members who cannot make the journey to the medical camp on their own.

The World Bank has committed funds in support of this project, however, more funds are urgently needed to finance the Jabri clinic throughout the winter. Other Real Medicine projects in Pakistan are being supported by the World Health Organization, Oxfam, and UNICEF.

Giorgio Pietramaggiore, MD has returned to Boston and is available for interviews.

The Real Medicine Foundation was formed in response to the tsunami disaster that devastated Southeast Asia in December 2004. Using a unique "friends helping friends" approach, the grassroots organization has rapidly grown into an international volunteer network. Real Medicine projects include long term rebuilding support in Sri Lanka and Pakistan, as well as psycho trauma support for survivors of Hurricane Katrina. Find out more about Real Medicine Foundation at www.realmedicinefoundation.org.

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