

News Release
For Immediate Release
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Milwaukee Physical Rehabilitation Consortium Helping Nepal Earthquake Victims Recover

April 25, 2015 – Milwaukee – World-class expertise rooted in Milwaukee is helping lead medical rehabilitation efforts after the Nepal earthquake disaster. The International Rehabilitation Forum (IRF), a 501c3 organization led by Milwaukee native Dr. Andrew J. Haig, is advising rehabilitation responders, providing guidance in government response planning and raising funds to support the country's long-term disaster recovery.

“While the immediate response to those injured in this devastating earthquake is critical, thousands of earthquake survivors likely will be left with severe disabilities from brain injury, spinal cord injury, amputation and other trauma. IRF is assisting the country's only physician in the physical medicine and rehabilitation specialty – a resident finishing his training in Bangladesh – in developing plans for immediate and continuing care for people who will have life-changing disabilities,” says Haig, IRF president.

After working with Pakistani physicians to publish research on their heroic response to an earthquake, in 2009 IRF held its first international conference on Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PMR) in Kayseri, Turkey. At the conference, medical experts from the United States, China, Pakistan, Haiti and other countries shared their expertise on the best ways to respond to earthquakes to limit initial trauma during evacuation and provide ongoing support for major disabling injuries. Since then, IRF has coordinated knowledge in this area to physicians around the world and advocated that early fundraising is essential for developing long-term programs to care for people with lifelong disabilities.

Haig says Nepal's Dr. Raju Dhakal, the IRF member who is finishing his PMR training in Bangladesh, has asked IRF for assistance in initial trauma care to as well as help in developing a sustainable rehabilitation plan, which he will share with the Nepal government. IRF has started a fund to support these efforts, all of which will go to the Nepal rehabilitation response, using the hashtag #IRFNepal at www.rehabforum.org.

The International Rehabilitation Forum is a nonprofit consortium of more than 50 global universities and leaders dedicated to building medical rehabilitation throughout the world. IRF president Dr. Andrew Haig, recipient of the top national PMR research, education, and clinician awards, is a tenured professor at the University of Michigan. He is a graduate of UW-Milwaukee and the Medical College of Wisconsin where he continues as volunteer professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. IRF communications director Tom Haig is an award-winning broadcast journalist and wheelchair user. For more information, see www.rehabforum.org.

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