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Michigan Eye-Bank Medical Director gives aid in Haiti

ANN ARBOR, Mich. – Michigan Eye-Bank Medical Director H. Kaz Soong, M.D. traveled to Haiti last week to help his colleagues in the earthquake-ravaged nation.

Soong had grown to love Haiti during two previous humanitarian missions to the country, and as he learned the extent of the devastation caused by the quake, he knew he had to help. When he was invited to join a medical team from the University of Miami, which had set up a 250-bed field hospital, he jumped at the chance.

"Patients came (to the hospital) in droves twenty-four/seven," Soong says.

Although Soong is an ophthalmologist, during his four days there, he performed whatever tasks were needed. Most of the cases that came to the hospital were orthopedic, so he set broken bones, took x-rays and performed amputations. He, along with the other doctors at the hospital, also emptied bedpans, swept floors and fed patients.

"As a surgeon, you cannot go there with any ego," Soong says.

Soong brought with him medical supplies donated by Midwest Eye-Banks from its inventory. What he couldn't take with him, he shipped to the University of Miami's Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, to be put on a flight to the field hospital. The items are desperately needed by doctors in the region.

"Midwest Eye-Banks is proud to support Dr. Soong on this important humanitarian mission," says Kevin Ross, President and CEO of Midwest Eye-Banks. "We will continue to do anything and everything we can for any future trips to the devastated region."

Soong said donations are helpful, but cautions people to look into the organizations to which they donate. Ideally, he believes, monetary contributions should be used to rebuild Haiti's infrastructure, making it better than it was before.

Soong hopes to make another trip to Haiti in March.

H. Kaz Soong, M.D. is a Professor of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences at the University of Michigan. He specializes in cornea and external diseases and refractive surgery, and practices out of the W.K. Kellogg Eye Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Midwest Eye-Banks is a charitable, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the restoration of sight. It recovers, evaluates, and distributes human eye tissue for transplantation. It also supports research into the causes and cures of blinding eye conditions, promotes donation awareness through public and professional education, and provides humanitarian aid to people in need of corneal transplantation throughout the world. For more information, visit Midwest Eye-Banks online at www.midwesteyebanks.org or call (800) 247-7250.

