

Professionalising the International Medical response to Disaster

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Whilst the international search and rescue advisory group (INSARAG) has made great strides in both setting and improving standards in international search and rescue over the last 30 years, it is only recently that a similar approach to the medical responses has been adopted. The catalyst to this was the concerns raised about the perceived inadequacy of the medical response to the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, when many of the international teams were viewed as being unprepared, inexperienced and ill-equipped. This culminated in what has been considered to be a large number of inappropriate surgical interventions. Following this PAHO and WHO brought together an international group to form what was initially the Foreign Medical Teams Working Group and now the International Emergency Medical Teams initiative with its own secretariat based at WHO Geneva. This has established a registration system and minimum standards, with a number of teams already verified by WHO and many more in the pipeline. An online Virtual On Site Operations Coordination Centre has been developed to further refine the selection and dispatch of international medical teams. This presentation will detail the history of these developments and how the international medical response to these large-scale events might be further improved and where the process of professionalisation might take us.