



## WITNESS TO PLANS IN ACTION

**“I wanted to take a moment to personally thank your entire team for the incredible job you did in evacuating my daughter, Nicole, from Haiti. Your team was extremely professional and organized throughout the entire extraction process and at no time did Nicole feel unsafe while in your care. I can't express how much my wife and I appreciate what you've done. We are truly grateful and will always remember your contribution. If it weren't for the efforts of International SOS, Nicole would undoubtedly still be in Haiti.” - Russell Dionne.**

Nicole Dionne was in a car stopped outside a hospital office in Port-au-Prince on January 12. She was on her way back to the Hospital Albert Schweitzer in Deschapelles, about 40 miles north.

A second-year MPH student in global health at Emory University, Dionne was researching her thesis, a descriptive overview of diabetic patients and comparison of the hospital's treatment to the standards set by the International Diabetes Federation. Her work would serve as a guide for future development of community-based preventive programs.

**Industry:**

University

**Service:**

Comprehensive Membership

**Location:**

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

When the earthquake hit, "I initially thought the car had been hit from behind," she says. "I didn't really understand what was happening until I saw the buildings around us start to collapse. Our driver managed to make it back to the hospital after finding an alternate route out of the city."

Deschapelles, she found, was undamaged, but patients from the greater Port-au-Prince area were flooding in. "Patients were arriving by any means possible - motorcycles, the back of pickup trucks, buses," she says. "At the time I left the hospital, a week after the earthquake, patients were still arriving. Hospital staff were working nonstop. There were more than 250 patients waiting for surgery."

An International SOS team met her at the Port-au-Prince airport to put her on a private helicopter flight out of the country. The scene at the airport was chaotic. The U.S. State Department had instructed American citizens to go to the airport to be evacuated, but the U.S. military had cut off entry because of overcrowding. The International SOS team paid a private jet pilot for a seat on board, and Dionne was

on her way to Santo Domingo to catch a commercial flight back to the states.

"As a student of global public health, I have learned a lot by seeing the emergency relief process," she wrote of her experience in Haiti after returning home. "We spend a lot of time in the classroom learning about preparedness, but seeing the plans in action is something completely different. With every disaster response, there is a lot to be learned. Each time we can improve.

"If it weren't for school starting [in January], I would like to have stayed at the hospital and continue helping there," she adds. "I think some family members thought this would change my career goals and push me into working domestically, but my fellow classmates in global health all understood how much more motivated this situation makes me to finish my degree and get working in the field."

Within 24 hours after the Haiti earthquake struck on January 12, International SOS with its joint-venture partner, Control Risks, had an incident management team on-the-ground in Port-au-Prince ready to assist its members. Nicole Dionne was one of 90 members who were evacuated either by plane or helicopter to Santo Domingo and then safely home. More than 100 clients from non-governmental organizations, universities and corporations received advice and assistance after the crisis that supported thousands of relief workers, students, expatriates and others. International SOS helped hundreds of clients find alternative evacuation routes out of the country and the assistance centre network handled more than 3,000 medical and security calls.



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