

Physical Therapy in Haiti: Paying it Forward

Larry Ronan, MD, poetically described his mentor, Thomas S. Durant, MD, as a “very large bonfire” who would impact those he encountered with “life-changing sparks”. Almost 20 years after his passing, Dr. Durant’s legacy continues to have a positive impact.

Rachel Lampros, PT, DPT, a physical therapist with the Sports Medicine Center in the Mass General Department of Orthopedics, recently made her fifth volunteer trip to Haiti since 2015. Working as the Massachusetts Chapter Director of the nonprofit [STAND](#), whose mission is to establish permanent access to orthopedic rehabilitative services in Haiti through direct patient care and clinical training of its citizens, she is committed to helping the Haitian people the right way.

“We do a lot of community outreach and education and we employ Haitian medical providers,” Dr. Lampros said. “We’ve been really focused to make sure this is sustainable and that we’re not creating a clinic that is reliant on this third party, but making sure that they have the skills to carry on and be completely autonomous.”



Founded in 2015, STAND operates a physical therapy clinic in Port-au-Paix, a city on Haiti’s northwest coast. Volunteer therapists from around the world open the clinic every couple of months and treat local citizens free of charge. Each time the clinic is open hundreds of patients receive free treatment ranging from acute pain management to the building of new prosthetics.

Dr. Lampros discovered the conviction to commit to this project long term shortly after returning from her first trip and

evaluating what she had seen. “I remember talking to my mom about it and being like ‘that was so hard but I’m so fortunate to have these things I don’t worry about day in and day out. How can I pay this forward in some way?’”

While researching how to become more involved in Haiti, Dr. Lampros



discovered the [Thomas S. Durant Fellowship for Refugee Medicine](#), a fund that honors the late physicians’ “spirit of dedication and service through sponsoring health care professionals to serve refugee populations and victims of complex humanitarian disasters”. The Durant Fellowship has funded her three most recent trips.

Dr. Ronan is the Director of the Thomas S. Durant, MD Fellowship for Refugee Medicine. “It is the legacy of Dr. Tom Durant to be present among the world’s poorest and most in need to bear witness and to provide what help we can, wherever and whenever we can,” Dr. Ronan said. “Dr. Lampros follows in this tradition and we are proud we can sponsor her work in Haiti.”

Dr. Lampros credits her work with STAND for reminding her about the importance of the human connection in healthcare, for both the patient and provider. “When you can connect with someone from a different background, a different culture in a way that may change their quality of life, such as providing for their family, it makes you feel like you’re making a meaningful difference,” Dr. Lampros said. “Any provider who is looking to just expand their horizon in terms of what physical therapy and what medicine can do right now, this is going to force you to really reflect on your practice and challenge you in ways that you can’t really predict,” Dr. Lampros said. “Anyone who’s looking to become a better clinician and maybe become a better human should really consider global health opportunities.”