



INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS

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International Medical Corps Recognized for Contributions in Public Health: Recipient of UC Berkeley Public Health Hero Award

Los Angeles, CA February 28, 2008 – International Medical Corps (IMC) will receive the University of California, Berkeley, School of Public Health's 2008 Organizational Public Health Hero Award, which recognizes distinguished achievement in advancing public health. IMC is being recognized for its commitment to the field in the face of global shortages in the health care workforce, particularly in the world's most poverty-stricken, remote, and dangerous environments.

The award will be presented by Dr. Mark Smolinski, director of the Predict and Prevent Initiative, a program created by Google, Inc. that identifies and responds to emerging risks, such as infectious disease, with the use of information technologies.

“International Medical Corps founder, Dr. Robert Simon, and its President & CEO, Nancy Aossey, have devoted their lives to delivering life-saving health care training and relief and development programs. IMC has set up clinics, transported medicines and supplies, and trained local health care professionals in places such as Soviet-occupied Afghanistan and war-torn Darfur, Sudan—all with the goal of rehabilitating devastated health care systems and bringing them back to self-reliance,” says Stephen M. Shortell, dean of the University of California, Berkeley, School of Public Health.

The Public Health Heroes honor was established in 1996 by the University of California, Berkeley, School of Public Health, with the objective of broadening people's awareness and understanding of the public health field by recognizing individuals and organizations for their contributions to promoting and protecting the health of the human population. Past organizational heroes include Kaiser Permanente for nationwide provision of integrated health services, and the San Francisco Department of Health for its leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS. International Medical Corps will accept the award at a ceremony to be held April 2, 2008, at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco. (For information about the Public Health Heroes Awards Ceremony, visit <http://www.publichealthheroes.org>.)

International Medical Corps was founded in the early 1980s, when Dr. Simon—then a young emergency-room physician at UCLA Medical Center—read a report about the plight of the Afghan people following the 1979 Soviet invasion and occupation. All but 200 of the country's 1,500 doctors had been executed, imprisoned, or exiled, and all relief agencies had been ordered out of the country. He felt he had to do something to help, and began making trips to Afghanistan to provide medical assistance directly to

civilians, eventually even selling his Malibu home to finance a clinic in the battered Kunar River Valley.

“I saw right away that a few little clinics weren’t going to amount to much,” Dr. Simon recalls. “The real problem for the Afghans was how to reconstruct their entire medical system.” International Medical Corps decided to set up a full-time Afghan medic training center in the nearby Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan. “At the time, almost everyone in the relief community said it couldn’t be done,” says Aosse. “The prevailing opinion was that you couldn’t simultaneously provide relief and build local capacity in such an unstable environment. IMC challenged that notion.”

At the end of one nine-month course, however, International Medical Corps’ Afghan medics could diagnose and treat 75-80 percent of the injuries and illnesses they encountered in the field. By 1990, IMC had graduated more than 200 medics who helped establish 57 clinics and 10 hospitals in 18 provinces throughout rural Afghanistan—serving more than 50,000 patients per month.

“It is exactly this kind of commitment to bringing health care to the most vulnerable that brought International Medical Corps to the attention of the awards committee,” says Dean Shortell.

International Medical Corps has gone on to provide life-saving care in more than 45 countries worldwide, responding to nearly every emergency in the last two decades. It deploys quickly in emergencies and then stays on to teach life-saving skills so that people locally can become self-reliant. Its training assures continuity and a new level of care for those impacted by conflict, tragedy and extreme poverty.

Over the years, International Medical Corps has responded to the world’s most devastating man-made and natural disasters, including famine in Somalia, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, the Rwandan genocide, and atrocities against children in Sierra Leone. More recently, IMC was a first responder after the 2004 tsunami in southeast Asia, the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, responded domestically following Hurricane Katrina, and is among the dwindling number of humanitarian agencies still working in Darfur and Iraq.

Since its inception in 1984, International Medical Corps’ mission has been clear: Relieve the suffering of those affected by war, natural disaster, and disease by delivering vital health care services that focus on training. Passing on essential skills that help people help themselves is critical if those hit by tragedy are to return to self-reliance. IMC is among the four percent of U.S. charities that have received a four-star rating over four consecutive years by Charity Navigator, America’s premier independent charity evaluator.