

Getting It Done in Disease-ravaged Haiti

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Cholera outbreaks, disputed elections, civil unrest and earthquakes are unlikely to deter the commitment of Tulane researchers to improve the infrastructure of Haiti, says Carl Kendall, director of the Tulane Center for Global Health Equity. The staying power of Tulane University on the ground in Haiti is due in part to the way in which researchers work within the country, Kendall says.



Planning their work in Haiti are, from right, Carl Kendall, Wuleta Lemma, Marie Aubry and Tara Doskey of the Tulane Center for Global Health Equity. This week marks one year since the devastating Haiti earthquake. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

“We've got explicit goals that are not political goals,” Kendall says when asked about the country's political instability. “No one is denying the need for more health staff and training for a nurse auxiliary staff. We think that public health can be a less politicized aspect of the state.”

At the request of the Haiti minister of health who visited Tulane in July, [Kendall](#) and his colleagues are developing a training program for a new cadre of nurses. The nurse auxiliary course will begin on Jan. 22, starting with a cholera module. The team also is organizing a two-day cholera training workshop for public sector and other staff members.

The group works with the Haiti Ministry of Health, whose staff is likely to remain in place through political unrest.

“Building local capacity to respond to the needs is flying below the radar. It helps to have local staff who can blend in, who are plugged in to Haiti, who have families and systems of intelligence so that if there's going to be a demonstration passing by the office, they get a call ahead of time and clear out,” explains Kendall, who is a professor of medical anthropology and community health at the Tulane [School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#).

Tulane's reputation is based on providing a complete program package.

“You do what you need to get things done,” Kendall says ? providing whatever is required, from training materials to desks and computers. “Our partners have trust that whatever we commit to doing, we'll get it done.”

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