

# The Harbinger Foundation:

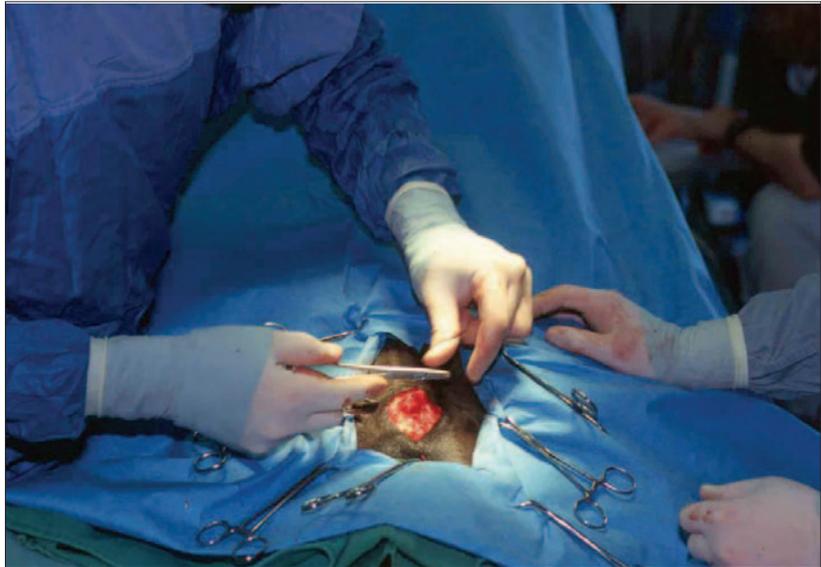
Think Globally, Give Locally

At the Harbinger Foundation, we ask ourselves, why do so few foundations fund work outside Canada? Our Foundation's most successful granting has been for such work. The following grant story demonstrates why.

The Canadian Network for International Surgery (CNIS) is a non-government organization (NGO) with an office in Vancouver that uses Canadian volunteer surgeons to teach surgical skills to general practitioners in Africa. It has also initiated extensive work in injury reduction.

The history of the development of CNIS revolves around the iron determination of one man, Dr. Ronald Lett. Dr. Lett is a surgeon and adjunct Professor at McGill University. One week before leaving for Ethiopia to teach a short course to general practitioners in practical surgical skills, Dr. Lett was told by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) that his funding had been cut. This meant that he could only do one week of teaching instead of the planned two. A medical student under Dr. Lett and a member of the Harbinger Foundation family had already signed on as a volunteer for this project. He persuaded the Foundation to donate \$5,000 so that he and Dr. Lett could complete the project. For only \$5,000 an additional 12 doctors were trained!

From an initial grant of \$5,000 the support of the foundation grew. CNIS began to develop a



The Harbinger Foundation is helping to train African surgeons.

structure and survived the requisite two years to be eligible for a CIDA grant. CIDA support ensured a sound financial base for the network.

The story took an unexpected turn when Dr. Lett met Dr. Olive Kobusingye from Uganda at the international medical meetings held in Ottawa every November. She said that what Uganda needed was an epidemiological approach to injury — they needed to determine the causes of injury and death.

So began the Injury Control Centre — Uganda (ICC-U). A systematic study was undertaken of both an urban and a rural area. Road traffic accidents were found to be number one cause of injury and death burns second and gunshots third. The rate of injury from road traffic accidents is about 30 times that of Canada

and death rates are about 100 times higher.

The World Health Organization (WHO), which has a mandate to help reduce injury in developing countries and the Rockefeller Foundation became partners and supported the epidemiological study. For the past few years, The Donner Foundation (Canada) has been a strong supporter.

Now more than eight countries in Africa are involved in programs in injury reduction, connecting with each other through a formal network.

The principles of good granting are seen throughout the development of CNIS work.

The responsibility for running the program is being transferred over time to the host country and practical surgical skills pro-

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grams are being integrated into the medical schools' curricula. Now injury prevention is on the government's agenda.

Why should Canadian foundations become involved with global issues?

Our world is interconnected as never before. We feel the impact of disease, which knows no borders, the displacement of peoples and wars whose effects are diminishing the resources of the entire world. And, a little money goes a very long way.

We have funded CNIS for 10 years, and are finding it difficult to wind down. We started with a \$5,000 grant and are completing a final multi-year commitment which will add up to a total of about \$300,000. There is still work to be done, new countries to bring into the network. There is no limit to the need for help.

For the Harbinger Foundation, working with CNIS has given us the chance to be involved and to learn. We can see change as the African countries take control. As Dr. Lett says, even though governments in some African

countries may be corrupt, giving to medical schools and to NGO's can strengthen the country at the grass roots level, the place where change takes root.

Hats off to CNIS and those involved with this network in so many African countries. Our Foundation has appreciated the opportunity to be the first and longest funder.

We know that these funds have made a difference.

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