HURRICANE FLORENCE RESPONSE

Hurricane Florence was a powerful and long-lived hurricane that caused severe damage in the Carolinas in September 2018. Florence dropped as much as 35 inches of rain, caused extensive freshwater flooding, and killed 30 people total, with 21 of those in North Carolina.

Heart to Heart International's (HHI) advance team was positioned on the ground before the hurricane came ashore. Headquarters deployed medical teams and the mobile medical unit (MMU) soon after.

While flooded roads remained a challenge throughout the length of the response, and especially in the early days, the teams were able to establish clinics with the MMU in Morehead City and Maxton, N.C., treated patients in shelters throughout Duplin County, performed tetanus vaccination clinics in the evenings for the Craven County Emergency Operations Center, and performed a tetanus vaccination clinic at a church in Jacksonville, N.C.

To ensure efficient and effective work, HHI coordinated with other NGOs on the ground in N.C., various county officials, State Senator Danny Britt, Jr., and met with N.C. Governor Ray Cooper at one of the Duplin County shelters.

In addition to distributing hygiene kits to patients at our clinics, HHI also partnered with local churches and organizations to distribute kits in their own communities, including: New Bern, Jacksonville, Fayetteville, Wilmington, Kenansville, Newton, Grove, and Goldsboro (Wayne County).
HURRICANE FLORENCE RESPONSE

From September 17 to September 24, 2018, the HHI medical team worked at the MMU stationed in front of Cartaret County Health Care, a hospital that received damage in the storm and was not fully functioning. Patients were seen for storm-related wounds, poison ivy and respiratory issues caused by mold. Some cases include:

- A woman who cut off part of her finger while she and her husband were cutting up limbs.
- A man who had surgery two weeks earlier to remove part of his colon. His trailer was condemned after the storm, so he had been living in his car with his wife and two teenage sons. All the medical offices were closed as were the pharmacies, so he had no way to get his medication. HHI was able to get him the medications he needed to continue his recovery.
- A man who had very high blood pressure and had been out of medication for three days. He didn’t want to go to the emergency room, but when he heard about the HHI clinic, he went to be seen. The HHI doctor was able to get him his medication.
- A man who went out during what he thought was a lull in the storm. He was caught by the strong winds and thrown across a parking lot, causing a concussion and bruising. He came to the medical team at HHI for treatment.
HURRICANE FLORENCE RESPONSE

Some of the shelters where HHI treated patients had no power, no running water and no sewer. They were hot and crowded. Often patients had pre-existing conditions, such as high blood pressure or hypoglycemia, that were exacerbated by the difficult environment. The HHI team went in prepared to treat and prepared to listen. Because in some cases, simply knowing that someone cares can be the most potent medicine.

An 86-year-old woman with frail health was one of those patients HHI helped at a shelter. Her son had come to the shelter with her and told their story:

My mother, brother and I were in a car fleeing the storm when the flood waters began rising. Rapidly. The car ran into high water and before they could get away, the car was washed off the road. I grabbed my mom and pushed her out of the car. I found a branch and, while holding on to my mom, grabbed on to it. I watched the car being swept away with my brother still inside. My mom and I held on to that branch for 40 minutes in the rain, rushing water and wind. My mom hadn’t seen my brother get stuck in the car. She thought he got out, and I couldn’t figure out how to tell her he hadn’t.

When the HHI team met the mother-son duo at the shelter, they evaluated her health condition and determined she needed more help and support before being told about other son’s death. She had just lost her husband the year before.

A grief counselor was brought in, and, working together, the team ensured the woman was transported to a hospital, admitted and stabilized before she was told about her son's death.

The son was grateful to the HHI team for providing the care his mother needed at such a difficult time. “All I can think of, all I can dream of, is my brother going down in that car.”

Sometimes in the face of such trauma, all we can do is listen and show we care.
RESPONSE BY THE NUMBERS

After Hurricane Florence hit the North Carolina coast and dumped record amounts of rainfall throughout the state, Heart to Heart International responded with medical teams, medicines and medical supplies to help those in need.

**PATIENT ENCOUNTERS**

1,262

Patients seen by HHI medical volunteers.

**HYGIENE KITS DELIVERED**

15,220

Personal Hygiene Kits delivered to those in need in North Carolina.

**VACCINES ADMINISTERED**

515

Tetanus vaccines administered by HHI medical volunteers.

**PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS**

12

Number of partners HHI shipped aid to after Hurricane Florence.

**SHIPMENTS OF AID**

$104,064

Value of shipments from HHI to those in need in North Carolina. Shipments included medications, water, medical supplies and hygiene kits.