



News Release

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Instruments of Mercy to Repair Instruments Aboard Mercy Ships' Floating Hospital

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – August 18, 2009 – Instruments of Mercy®, a charity that secures surgical instrument repair for medical mission teams, now is assisting Mercy Ships®, whose hospital ship, the *Africa Mercy*, serves some of the world's poorest populations. The new partnership means that surgical instruments aboard the ship will be professionally restored for the first time in five years.

Instruments of Mercy was founded in 2004 by Gene Robinson, CEO of Integrated Medical Systems International, Inc. (IMS), a Birmingham-based surgical instrument repair company. In June, Robinson was among representatives of IMS and Instruments of Mercy who visited the *Africa Mercy*, anchored in the harbor of Cotonou, Benin.

With the support of IMS, Instruments of Mercy now is assisting the surgical teams who perform some 7,000 surgeries per year in the *Africa Mercy's* six operating rooms. In September, Willie Miles will become the first IMS technician to repair instruments aboard the ship. Miles normally restores instruments for Boston-area hospitals from a mobile repair lab, and working onboard a hospital ship will be a new experience. "It's a chance to help so many people in a way that I never thought would be possible," he said.

Robinson said that when he visited the ship, he saw instruments that were in good shape but in need of TLC. "After a time, they need sharpening, and they need adjustment," he said. Better performing instruments, he added, can mean shorter surgeries. "That's better for the patient, and it enables the surgical team to help more people. That's huge, because you can see a tension there - everyone is hoping their loved one will get to see the doctor."

Already, instruments are being restored and replaced for the ship's surgeons. Mercy Ships' dental team has been provided with 60 new stainless instruments, and instruments were customized for an eye surgeon who removes hundreds of cataracts per month aboard ship. "We are blessed with a crew of world-class volunteer surgeons, nurses, and other medical professionals," said Mercy Ships CEO Sam Smith. "To optimize the effectiveness of their service, we definitely want our medical equipment and instruments to be in top-notch working condition. This partnership will clearly help us accomplish that goal, and we are very grateful."

Surgeries performed on the *Africa Mercy* change lives, said Robinson. "They literally help the blind see and the lame walk," he said. "They're removing disabling cataracts and tumors, repairing cleft palates, enabling children to walk for the first time."

Toney Peer, director of Instruments of Mercy, said the Mercy Ships partnership is a logical next step for Instruments of Mercy. "We've assisted medical mission groups around the world," she said. "But through Mercy Ships, we can reach many more people."

About Instruments of Mercy - Instruments of Mercy, Inc. is a non-profit organization committed to ensuring that the instruments used for medical service trips are in proper working condition. Instruments of Mercy has supported more than 31 mission trips in 20 countries.

About Mercy Ships - Mercy Ships is an international Christian charity whose hospital ships partner with land-based programs to deliver transformational health care at no charge to the world's forgotten poor. Since 1978, Mercy Ships has had more than 2.16 million direct beneficiaries. The countries served by Mercy Ships are ranked as the poorest in the world by the United Nations Human Development Index (UNHDI).

About IMS - More than 2,500 healthcare facilities throughout the United States have partnered with IMS to ensure that instruments are ready when the surgical team is ready to operate. Headquartered in Birmingham, Ala., with repair facilities in Florida, Alabama, and Arizona, IMS provides technical excellence to meet manufacturers' performance standards.

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