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## DR. TAREK RAZEK

### SURGICAL RESPONSE IN THE SUDAN

Travelling, says Dr. Tarek Razek, had a significant impact on his decision to become a doctor. As a boy, he often went to Egypt to visit extended family, and even then found the disparities between the First and Third Worlds shocking. "It sort of grabbed me that I could use (medical) skills to add something to the general state of affairs."

Give back he did. Today, Razek is chief of Trauma at McGill University Health Centre in Montreal and he's the current chair of the Canadian Network for International Surgery (CNIS), an organization he's been volunteering with for years. His foray into mission work began simultaneous with his career as a general surgeon and trauma specialist, when he conducted feasibility studies at a clinic in Haiti while still a med student. "It was interesting to see these guys (the doctors) struggling to get stuff done with such limited resources." He learned something from that.

As a war surgeon, Razek's been on missions with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), as well as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In 2004, he

spent four exhausting months at an ICRC hospital in Sudan, where he operated on people seven days a week, 10 hours a day. "It was extraordinarily fatiguing. And it just never stopped." In war zones, the traumas are profound: landmine injuries, children with both legs blown off, pregnant women carrying dead babies. To see a population in such devastation was overwhelming, but, he says, "you generate a lot of respect for the way people bear their suffering."

The bulk of Razek's remarkable record of volunteering has been with the CNIS, which strives to provide surgical services in underdeveloped regions, and where he focuses on training health-care providers in modern trauma-care practices. (Simulations are done on a low-tech, low-cost basis—bamboo and sugar cane, he says, make good amputee models.) He's developed a program called Trauma Team Training to demonstrate how a pre-arranged, team response has a huge impact on positive outcomes.

Razek is now hoping to involve other Canadian docs in his cause by launching an international branch of the trauma surgical service at McGill Hospital. Western professionals can learn much from their colleagues in the developing world, he says, where severe traumas are treated on an almost daily basis.

*He spent four exhausting months at a hospital in Sudan operating 7 days a week, 10 hours a day*