

THEN & NOW

A reminder of the pace of change, and of timeless truths, from the Winter 1990 *Dartmouth Medicine*:

“The questions scientists ask,” wrote the late Dr. Mahlon Hoagland, former chair of biochemistry at DMS, “generally take the form of predictions: If I do this, that should happen. If a hypothesis offers no way to prove itself true or false, it is not useful scientifically. It should be thrown away; it is a belief. Knowledge advances on the wings of testable ideas, not of beliefs.”



1956

Year that Hoagland codiscovered transfer RNA

1934

Year that tRNA's other codiscoverer, Dr. Paul Zamecnik, graduated from Dartmouth Medical School

2009

Year that both died

Haitian students: From havoc to Hanover

Regina Duperval could find plenty to complain about: Her country lies in ruins, her education was interrupted, and she was nearly killed by the earthquake in Haiti a year ago.

But “complain” is a word that seems to be missing from her vocabulary. The closest Duperval, now a DMS first-year, comes to griping is to note that her birthday falls on January 1, Independence Day in Haiti, which means that every birthday she must eat a traditional Haitian soup made of giraumon, a squash-like vegetable. “I’m just fed up eating the same thing!” she laughs.

Duperval and fellow Haitian Yamile Blain were medical students at the State University School of Medicine in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, when the January 2010 earthquake destroyed their school completely. They are at Dartmouth through a special partnership between DMS and their school in Haiti. Though many U.S. universities accommodated Haitian undergraduates after the earthquake, DMS is the first medical school to take in students from Haiti.

Adjust: Dr. David Nierenberg, DMS’s senior associate dean for medical education, spearheaded the effort, working closely with the Haitian school’s vice dean, Dr. Dodley Severe. Medical education in Haiti typically runs six years, combining premedical college work and medical courses. Duperval and Blain had started

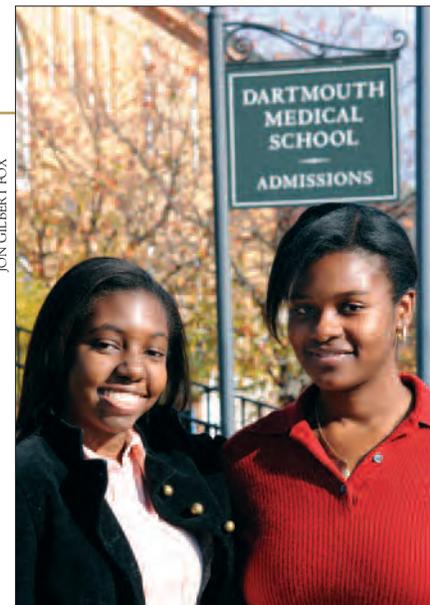
their third year in Haiti, which is similar to the first-year curriculum in the U.S. However, their classes in Haiti were conducted in French. Both are fluent in English—that was one criterion in the selection process—but the language adjustment, along with the colder weather, is among the differences they’ve had to get used to.

Floor: At the time of the earthquake, Duperval was watching TV with four other women on the top floor of a friend’s three-story house. The house started shaking, and the ceiling collapsed on top of them so they could barely move. Eventually, with help from a stranger, all five were able to pull themselves out. The house had collapsed completely—the third floor was at street level. “The people living on the first and second floor, they all died,” says Duperval.

“That was the longest night of my life. I couldn’t sleep at all,” says Blain. “I didn’t want to stay in the house. I was so scared, any kind of vibration would scare me.”

The days following the earthquake were just as chaotic. For example, Duperval recalls a woman who fell onto a charcoal grill, suffered third degree burns, and died because she was unable to get to a hospital. Both she and Blain worked for Red Cross Emergency Services in the quake’s aftermath.

Duperval’s dream is to become a pediatrician and estab-



JON GILBERT FOX

Yamile Blain, left, and Regina Duperval, right, joined DMS’s first-year class.

lish an orphanage in Haiti. “I think children and I, we get along very well,” she says. As for Blain, she’s interested in either surgery or emergency medicine. “I like surgery,” she says. “I like working with my hands.” And, she adds, “I found out during the earthquake that everybody was scared and a lot of people got crazy, and no one really knew what to do. So that’s why I’m interested in emergency medicine—knowing exactly what to do in a critical situation.”

Plan: In the meantime, both are enjoying their time at DMS, though the plan is that they’ll return to their school in Haiti when it reopens.

DMS is enjoying their presence, too, says Nierenberg. “In fact, we wish we could invite more than two to join us,” he says. But space constraints in certain labs allowed just for two. “However,” Nierenberg adds, “we expect to continue working with Vice Dean Severe to develop this educational partnership.”

MATTHEW C. WIENCKE