



## News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **U.S. Technician Traveling to Benin to Repair Surgical Instruments on Floating Hospital IMS® supports *Instruments of Mercy*® in its New Partnership with *Mercy Ships*®**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – September 3, 2009 – A surgical instrument technician who normally operates a mobile repair lab in Boston is preparing to take his skills to Africa, where he will work onboard the world's largest non-governmental hospital ship.

IMS, a leading provider of surgical instrument repair in the United States, is equipping and staffing a new instrument repair shop on the *Africa Mercy* in support of a new partnership between two non-profit organizations, *Instruments of Mercy* and *Mercy Ships*.

In mid-September, Willie Miles will become the first IMS technician to repair instruments onboard the ship, now anchored off the coast of Benin. Having lost a home in Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Miles is excited about the chance to assist others in need. "It's a chance to help so many people in a way that I never thought would be possible," he said.

Working in some of the world's poorest locales, *Mercy Ships* provides health care, including surgery, to those who otherwise would have no access. By restoring surgical instruments, Miles hopes he will enable the ship's volunteer surgeons to perform as many life-changing surgeries as possible – without concern about the condition of surgical instruments.

Gene Robinson, CEO of Birmingham-based IMS (Integrated Medical Systems International, Inc), founded the non-profit organization *Instruments of Mercy* in 2004, with the purpose of securing instrument repair for medical mission trips. This summer, Robinson was among representatives of IMS and *Instruments of Mercy* who visited the *Africa Mercy*, a ship where some 7,000 surgeries are performed per year. After touring the ship's six operating rooms, Robinson said he was amazed how many lives the ship's surgeons transform – correcting cleft palates, obstetric fistulae, advanced cataracts, bone deformities and other disabling conditions. "So many of those being treated on this ship are literally getting their lives back," he said.

The surgical instruments, Robinson noted, were in good shape, but they have not been fully refurbished in five years. "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."

With the support of IMS, *Instruments of Mercy* already has begun providing instrument restoration and replacement instruments for the ship's clinicians. In addition, *Mercy Ships*' dental team has received 60 new stainless instruments. In some cases, third-party suppliers have donated equipment or provided it at their cost. "It's really been inspiring to see other companies step forward - to help us as we seek to help others," Robinson said.

The new repair shop will support a volunteer effort of heroic scale. "We are blessed with a crew of world-class volunteer surgeons, nurses, and other medical professionals," said *Mercy Ships* CEO Sam Smith 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."

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 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.

**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).

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#### **Integrated Medical Systems International, Inc.**

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