



Gent,  
[chantal.bergen@ugent.be](mailto:chantal.bergen@ugent.be)  
RDRTF/Task Description

Dear

You have expressed your interest in becoming a volunteer for the Renal Disaster Relief Task Force (RDRTF). We are very grateful for this generous offer and welcome you as a member of the RDRTF family.

There are a few points that we would like to explain to you about our way of working before enrolling you definitively:

- Since you will be deployed in disaster areas, you need to be ready to work under stressful and emotional conditions. You will have to travel and work in not always as comfortable situations. Although Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF – Doctors Without Borders) and we ourselves do all we can to anticipate unexpected circumstances, you should foresee that from time to time, things do not work out as desired (e.g. flight delays, problems with visa).
- Since you will have to work under the umbrella of MSF, and since they are our hosts, you will need to adapt to their rules and habits. MSF goes to the damaged area with an own agenda, and at certain moments, a compromise will have to be found between their and our purposes. You should also realize that many MSF coworkers are non-medics or paramedics who are not aware of the patho-physiology of Acute Renal Failure (ARF), rhabdomyolysis or the crush-syndrome. You will have to be patient in explaining this again and again, and realize that this may take a substantial part of the time.
- You will have to deal with colleagues from foreign countries. You should show respect to their habits and culture. You will also have to deal to a large extent with the local medical and paramedical personnel. You should always realize that you are the external factor in this constellation whereby it is difficult if not impossible to impose our own rules. Diplomatic skills are highly appreciated, as well as knowledge of foreign languages. We find a good knowledge of English a must, because our teams are international and contacts with local doctors and nurses are essential. Insufficient knowledge of English is a burden for the entire group. Knowledge of other languages (also less traditional ones like Urdu, Pharsi) is useful.



- You will have to work in a team and social/sociable attitudes are desirable. It is unavoidable that some in the team will take a lead role (i.e. one nephrologist and one nurse). You will have to cope with the fact that you may not be the leader, even if you would desire to. On the other hand the leaders will have to cooperate with the rest of the team and should display willingness, openness, meet and discuss with their team members on a regular basis, and try to decide together with them on a basis of consensus. Please take into account that your primary mission is to help people.
- Since work is complex, and involves many aspects, organisational skills and regular planning are necessary. On the other hand, situations may change quickly and unexpectedly, necessitating flexibility.
- Although our mission is partly organisational and diplomatic, it is to a large extent medical and involves patients on regular wards as well as on the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). All these aspects will have to be dealt with on the mission.
- Although you may be confronted with all kinds of needs in the field, requests for goods and their transport should be centralised at the global coordination centre, currently in Ghent, Belgium.

This message is to make understandable to you our primary goals and ways of working. If you agree with these points, please let us know, so that we can enrol you definitively on our volunteer list.

Yours Sincerely,

Raymond Vanholder  
Chairman RDRTF  
Professor of Medicine,  
Nephrology Section,  
University Hospital Gent,  
Belgium