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## Physicians help child from Haiti

4-year-old suffered burns from cooking oil

BY JOHN A. TORRES  
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Brevard County doctors and a host of other good Samaritans teamed up to save the arm of a Haitian girl severely burned by cooking oil.

Four-year-old, Lensa Elmidor, arrived here this week. Before she was in the country 24 hours, she had seen two doctors.

Burned when a pot of oil fell on her more than 15 months ago, the child lost use of her left hand, which has withered. Her left arm is locked in a 90-degree angle.

The fear is that expanding scar tissue will choke off her arm like a tourniquet and require amputation. In Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, that could mean death.

"It looks better than I expected under the wrap," said Dr. Michael Diaz, a Melbourne plastic surgeon who examined Lensa Thursday. "It looks clean, not infected. But it's obvious this burn is more than a year old, and it's restricting her growth."

Wearing pink Disney princess slippers and a bright tropical-colored dress, Lensa jumped up and down, chatted in Creole with strangers, played with a winged fairy doll and stamped out ants as she waited at the doctor's office.

Diaz said her care would involve skin grafts, surgery to try to loosen her elbow and wrist and lots of physical therapy. Doctors say the strategy is trying to salvage what's left of her arm.

"Getting this to be a functioning extremity is unlikely," Diaz said. "If she had stayed in Haiti, the arm would have become completely useless and would have possibly had to be amputated."

Lensa is here on a 364-day visa acquired with the help of U.S. missionary Barbara Walker, who runs a charity village in Bon Repos for battered women and orphans.

When Lensa's mother left her village, she contacted businessman and missionary Joe Hurston in Titusville. He contacted Dr. Stephen Badolato, who runs Premiere Urgent Care in Suntree. Badolato and Hurston had traveled in 2008 to Walker's village in Haiti.

Badolato, a primary care specialist, is coordinating the girl's care. She will stay with the Badolato family for several weeks after surgery.

"She has third-degree burns all over her left upper extremity and has been through so much. Yet, she is such an amazing child, so full of joy," Badolato said. "This little girl was basically abandoned by her parents. We can save her life."

For now, Lensa is staying at the Viera home of Joe and Lydia Prussel, who helped out last year when

another Haitian girl was brought in for special surgery.

"We . . . just have a desire to help, so here we are," Lydia Prussel said. "I'm amazed at how adaptable these kids are."

Orthopedic surgeon John Hermansdorfer will perform the elbow and possible wrist surgeries.

"Hopefully, this will change her life forever," Badolato said.

## Additional Facts

How to help

The doctors need people who speak Creole to help teach 4-year-old Lensa Elmidor to speak English and to provide translation services for her. Call 773-5331.

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