

Telemedicine: Taking health care to the world's far corners

Ann Aerts has stared death in the eye. The head of the non-profit [Novartis Foundation](#) lost colleagues when she was serving as an emergency medicine physician on a medical mission in a dangerously unstable country.

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"I had many of these moments when I thought, 'This is really too big,' " Aerts recalls. " 'We can never do anything about this and I'd better go home and have a normal life.' "

Despite the dangers, Aerts stayed, and spent more than 10 years devoting herself to training health workers and providing emergency care wherever the need was greatest. Today, she continues to follow her passion by developing corporate responsibility initiatives with the NFSD and other global health organizations to bring healthcare to the world's most remote regions.

"With the Novartis Foundation, we work in areas where we are sure we can build something up, and we can work with the local team," Aerts says. "For example, our program on telemedicine in Ghana has doctors in a tele-consultation center providing advice by phone to the nurses in the communities, who then coach the community health workers in very remote areas."

Aerts, who says her early experience showed her there are huge, unmet medical needs everywhere in the world, is particularly happy to be working with the Foundation. "With Novartis and the Foundation, we can do so much to bring a business mindset to the solution to public health problems," she says.

While she admits that she is much less of an idealist after her years of experience in the field, she still believes

in the power of change, in the future and in her ability to be part of the solution. “I still have it,” she concludes with a smile.

Watch as Aerts tells her harrowing first-person on the ground story in the accompanying video.

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