



GLOBAL RESCUE CASE STUDY

Member Survives His Own Life-Threatening Diagnosis on Everest



Challenge: When Global Rescue member Dr. Ron Crystal set out to climb Mount Everest, the strength of his lungs was the least of his worries. Instead, the 77-year-old seasoned climber was focused on the north side, which is where he and two guides, including one who is an emergency room physician in France, decided to start their climb.

Reaching North Base Camp in Tibet as planned, at 5,150 meters (16,900 feet), Crystal had been to higher altitudes in the past but had not slept at a comparable altitude. As he headed toward Everest on to the glacier, something wasn't quite right.

Crystal was exhausted, out of breath and had a productive cough. All were symptoms of high altitude related illness, something Crystal, a pulmonary physician at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City, knew well.

Crystal was surprised his symptoms didn't include anything more severe. But then came the one symptom that prompted his own diagnosis – a potentially life-threatening medical emergency.

"My oxygen saturation had dropped and

my resting pulse, which is usually between 63 and 65 was at 95," Crystal said. "When I was lying flat, I just felt uncomfortable."

Crystal's diagnosis was high altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE). That's when the group physician contacted Global Rescue.

Solution: Global Rescue staff members quickly arranged transport for Crystal down to 4,300 meters (14,100 feet) to alleviate some of his symptoms and ensure he was stable enough for a medical evacuation to a clinic in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Once transported, he was examined by a physician who had been treating climbers in Kathmandu for more than a decade. Crystal was highly impressed by the level of care he received.

Result: "I know a lot about what I had. In fact, I've written an academic article about HAPE and I've lectured about it," Crystal said. "However, this doctor had seen hundreds of cases and he knew so much more about it than I did."