

Marine Institute navy student, Jean-Paul (J-P) Richard returned home last week after illness halted his attempt to summit Mount Aconcagua.

J-P was forced to stop his climb when he was diagnosed with high altitude cerebral edema (HACE). HACE is a severe form of and sometimes fatal altitude sickness. Immediate descent is a necessary life-saving measure so J-P had to return to base camp on Christmas Day to recover.

He began his climb of Aconcagua, South America's highest peak, on Dec. 15 in an attempt to raise awareness of the Canadian Forces Soldier On program. The Soldier On program was created in 2007 with collaboration from the Canadian Paralympic Committee. It contributes to optimizing the functional independence of injured soldiers by delivering services that support their full and active participation in physical activities, recreation or sport. The program promotes and supports the return to military service and is accomplished through close working relations with the Department of National Defense and the Canadian Forces.

His goal is to eventually conquer all Seven Summits, Kilimanjaro, Denali, Elbrus, Aconcagua, Carstensz Pyramid, Vinson and Everest.

Despite this set back, J-P is more determined than ever to achieve his goal. "I am going back there next Christmas to try again," said J-P. "This minor glitch only motivates me even more."

"I've never been one to give up. When I look at the obstacles overcome by those people in the Soldier On program, this set-back seems so insignificant."

J-P adds that the next summit on his list is Mount Elbrus, the [highest](#) mountain in Europe and the [highest point of Russia](#). He plans to tackle this next adventure this summer.