

2015 Mission Trips: March 16-26, 2015 – NEPAL

The 8th foot and ankle surgery mission was held in Kathmandu at the Nepal Orthopedic Hospital (NOH; <http://www.noh.org/np/>). Dr. Carl Kihm and Dr. Jennifer D'Amico now lead the mission, which was originally established by Dr. Stephen Miller. The trip is organized through the non-profit group called Healing the Children (<http://healingthechildren.org/>). The NOH Medical Director (Dr. Saju Padhan) and Hospital Director (Dr. Anil Shrestha) continue to support the planning and implementation of the mission. They market the mission locally to the general public and during the course of the year, they refer patients from their clinics to our NOH surgery camp. It is not uncommon for these patients and their families to travel up to 8 days to reach the hospital.

This year's team consisted of nine American members. Drs. Kihm and D'Amico returned for their 4th trip while Drs. Ali Khosroadbadi and 2nd year resident, Dr. Latika Hinduja, joined for their first Nepal mission experience. Amy Logan served as Team Administrator. Other team volunteers included return-member, Calei Ruggles (OR Nurse), and her daughter, Ashlee (Administrative Assistant and Photographer). Bojan Kuure (OR Nurse) returned for what was her 93rd mission trip! Jennifer Sherry, a producer of the nationally televised "The Doctors" show, documented the trip, which will later be featured on the program. The episode will feature some of our patients' pre-operative stories, their surgical journeys and follow-up.



Our team examined over 70 patients – many complex foot and ankle deformities in children and neglected deformities in adults (see bottom left). Some patients were not suitable for reconstruction. Non-surgical Ponsetti casts were applied for many pediatric patients with clubfoot deformity. Fifty-six surgical procedures were also performed on 22 patients. There was no cost to patients as the surgery was performed for free. Radiographs, ankle foot orthotic devices/braces, casting supplies and bandaging materials, hospital staffing, etc. were donated through fundraising efforts, Healing the Children, and via team members' personal contributions.



One of the most enjoyable parts of the trip is always to see our previous patients return for long-term follow-up assessment. No revision surgeries were required. See above: a patient with identical bilateral clubfoot returned 3 years following right foot reconstruction. A huge visual and functional improvement can be seen. She plans for left foot surgery next year.

Dr. Carl Kihm then traveled to a remote “Mountain Camp” at the District Hospital of Simkhet in Chainpur Bajhang, Nepal. This area of West Nepal is one of the poorest areas of the country and there was a great medical/surgical need. Travel to this remote region of Western Nepal required a flight and winding two-day bus trek through the Himalayas. Kihm served as the team’s foot and ankle surgeon, alongside two orthopedic hand surgeons from Switzerland (Drs. Katrin Hagen and George Wohlgensinger) and orthopedic surgeons from Nepal (lead by Dr. Yubaraj Kharel). Over 1,000 people came to the camp for assessment. Making a large surgical impact was somewhat difficult here due to the limited facilities and lack of supplies, electricity and (in some cases) follow-up arrangements. However, many procedures were performed here on patients of all ages.



All of our team members safely returned home to the United States. Less than four weeks later, on April 25, 2015, Kathmandu, Nepal and surrounding areas suffered from a devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake. Weeks later, during an initial phase of recovery, repair and reconstruction, a second earthquake of 7.3 magnitude struck. The already poor and damaged country was hit again. Aftershocks continue and the death toll is approaching 10,000. Countless others are injured and all have been affected in some way. The local hospitals were immediately overwhelmed. There was great need for supplies, equipment and medication. The NOH is structurally intact and the Nepali community is heroically banding together to assist those in need.



The hospital’s Medical Director, Dr. Saju Pradhan, explained, “We need medicines and food for these patients who are injured bodily and psychologically. We need financial help for treating them.”

In this time of devastating tragedy and unimaginable human suffering, our hearts go out to the people of Nepal. Monetary donations can be made to the hospital via <http://www.gofundme.com/NepalEarthquakeNOH>.

Dr. Kihm has linked the NOH with MedShare (<http://www.medshare.org/>, an Atlanta-based non-profit company which redistributes medical supplies to countries in need). MedShare has air-shipped a 40’x20’x10’ container filled with supplies and equipment to the NOH.

