

Medical Mission to El Salvador 2004 Anna Weber, DPM



The mission to San Salvador, El Salvador this fall was a huge success. The surgical team was comprised of surgeons, anesthesiologists, circulating nurses, scrub techs, podiatry residents and recovery room nurses. The team was led by Todd Gunzy, DPM. Other surgeons on the trip were Luke Cicchinelli, DPM (Greenville, NC), Todd Haddon, DPM (Longmont, CO), Jorge Penagos, MD (Guatemala City, Guatemala), Javier Aycart Testa (Madrid, Spain), and Michael Lawrence (Ringgold, GA). The anesthesia team was led by Kevin Barry, MD. Also on the team were Desi Ferrell, director of the Greater Philadelphia chapter of Healing the Children, and her assistant. A new and instrumental member of the team was Paul Sugg, a pedorthist from North Carolina.



Paul Suggs-Modifying an orthoses for a non-surgical patient.

He was able to fit many children with braces or orthoses. This proved to be a tremendous adjunct to the services we were able to provide.

The one-week mission began on Sunday, September 18. The team arrived at the Hospital de Zacamil that morning to an auditorium and a long hallway outside full of children waiting to be screened. Over 100 children were screened by two teams of doctors. The teams assessed each child's pathology and determined if surgery could improve their condition and their quality of life. Children who would benefit from surgical intervention were then medically

evaluated by the anesthesia team. Children who were not surgical candidates were often seen by the pedorthist for AFOs or orthoses.

Over the remainder of the week, the team operated on 40 patients and 56 feet. Surgeries performed included clubfoot corrections, vertical talus corrections, tendon transfers, hindfoot fusions, ankle fusions and flatfoot reconstructions. All patients were admitted for at least an overnight stay. While in recovery, and when rounding each day, children received donated stuffed animals and toys. The children and their parents were extremely grateful for the opportunity to have so many disabling deformities corrected. For many, even though their leg was still casted, this was the first time they had ever seen their foot in a straight alignment. One young woman, on seeing her toes pointing forward in the cast, wept "Es un milagro" ("it's a miracle"). She had had severely disabling neglected clubfoot



Young Woman with severe neglected clubfoot

honored each team member with a diploma for their service to the children and families of their country.

A mission team plans to return to El Salvador this spring, in order to foster the already strong relationship with the Hospital de Zacamil, the Rotary Club and the community.



With 13 years of medical mission experience, Todd Gunzy commented that “this is as smooth and efficient a trip as I have ever taken”. This was in large part due to close coordination between the Philadelphia chapter of Healing the Children and the Rotary Club in San Salvador. The rotary club provided a portion of our hotel accommodations, daily breakfast and lunch, and bus transport to and from the hospital. They advertised our trip both within San Salvador and in the outlying rural areas, and also served as a valuable liason with the hospital staff. At a Rotary Club Sponsored banquet, they