

Medical Mission to El Salvador 2006

For the fourth year in a row, a team of foot and ankle surgeons returned to the Hospital Zacamil in San Salvador, El Salvador. The trip was from February 25th to March 5th, 2006. The group of surgeons included team leader Todd Gunzy, DPM (Mesa, AZ); Luke Cicchinelli, DPM (Greenville, NC); Todd Haddon, DPM (Mesa, AZ); Jorge Penagos, MD (Guatamala City, Guatamala); Anna Weber, DPM (Chicago, IL); Micky Stapp, DPM (Martinez, GA); Joe Southerland, DPM (Cedar Hill, TX); and Paul Bours, DPM (Sydney, Australia). Kevin Barry, MD returned for his fourth straight year to head the anesthesia team. Paul Sugg, an orthotist and prosthetist, made orthoses and braces for many of the children. The team also included operating room circulators, scrub techs, recovery room nurses, two podiatry residents and two observing pre-med students. An integral part of the team, Desi Ferrell is director of the Greater Philadelphia chapter of Healing the Children. Healing the Children, the Podiatry Institute and the Rotary Club of El Salvador all make the mission possible by providing administrative support, community outreach, and assistance with travel and accommodations.

This year the team operated on 26 children. We saw many children this year who had residual clubfoot deformities following surgeries performed at local hospitals. These proved to be challenging and interesting cases. In addition to many clubfoot operations, we also performed surgery on metatarsus adductus deformities, flat foot, coalitions, supernumerary digits, and neuromuscular deformities.

Team member Paul Sugg, CPO, C. Ped forged a new and exciting relationship with a comprehensive national rehabilitation center called Funter. Funter is a non-profit facility, funded largely by the March of Dimes, which has a state-of-the-art gait examination lab, full orthoses and prostheses capabilities, physical therapy, art therapy and child psychology. The physical therapy wing at Funter has treadmills, bicycles, balance beams, weights and a swimming pool. In the future, we hope to refer many of our surgical patients to Funter for post-operative therapy. We also anticipate that they will be a key link in identifying and screening children who may benefit from surgery.

This was the fourth year that Drs. Gunzy and Cicchinelli have led a team to San Salvador, bringing the total number of children operated on there above 100. Each year, the team is able to see more children for long-term follow-up. Over the years, the team has strengthened its relationships with the children, families, physicians and community at-large in San Salvador.