Who We Are

The University of Kentucky Shoulder to Shoulder Ecuador program began in 2002. That year, Dr. Tom Young, Professor of Pediatrics, College of Medicine, led the first medical brigade to Ecuador with a small group of six committed participants who wanted to make a difference.

Just four years later, the group had expanded to over 30 participants, and Dr. Claudia Hopenhayn, Associate Professor of Epidemiology, College of Public Health, and originally from Argentina, joined Tom as brigade co-leader in 2006. Since then, the nature of the brigades has evolved into a larger multidisciplinary groups. Interest and opportunities continue to increase for students, professors, clinicians and volunteers.

In the summer of 2008 Tom and Claudia led two brigades, one in May and one in August; and three brigades are tentatively planned for 2009.

Participants of the May and August 2008 brigade included:

- Faculty members in the fields of medicine, public health, physical therapy, speech therapy, hydrology and education and education abroad staff.

- Graduate and professional students and residents from medicine, public health, nursing, pharmacy, physical therapy and several undergraduate majors.

- Members of the community with expertise in dentistry, social work, professional development and other skills.

Meet The Team

Top: Dr. Rich Mier, Pediatrician and Dr. Cristián Carrión, Family Physician

Bottom: Dr. Gemina Andrade, Dentist; Jaqueline Iza, Social Worker and Health Center Coordinator; Maricela Morales, Staff Support; Mercedes Mero, Health Promotor

Sponsors:
Meet our physicians

**Cristián Carrión** was born in the city of Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, Ecuador. He obtained his degree in Medicine and Surgery at the College of Medicine, Universidad Central de Quito. He then returned to his native city to work as an emergency room physician at the Regional Hospital of Santo Domingo. He also worked for the Ecuadorian Red Cross in a project titled “Humanitarian Help - Northern Frontier.” In April, 2007 Cristián joined Centro Médico Hombro a Hombro, and since January, 2008 he has served as Medical Director.

Cristián enjoys working in the Carlos Ruiz Burneo community.

“It am learning about health together with the community, which is a very gratifying and emotional experience,” he says. “My expectation is to have a healthier community, aware of the reality of the health problems we have.”

In addition to his work at the medical center, he is completing a master’s degree in tropical medicine at the University of Guayaquil.

Cristián is married and has two children: Cristián is six and Angie is three. In his spare time, he likes to play soccer, swim and sing.

In late 2008, Cristián visited Lexington for the first time as a STSE invited guest. He attended clinics with several physicians who have participated in STSE brigades and visited several partnering organizations, including Christ the King Cathedral and Kiwanis Club of Lexington.

**Rich Mier** is a pediatrician from Lexington, Kentucky. After 30 years of practicing at the University of Kentucky and at Shriner’s Hospital, Rich fulfilled a longtime ambition to work in Latin America when he joined the Centro Médico Hombro a Hombro staff in August of 2007. Rich and his wife Rita will be in Santo Domingo until the summer of 2009.

Below: The Tsáchila people are a traditional indigenous group from Ecuador who live in small, isolated communities. Here they pose after a cultural performance.
In addition to the growth of the brigade, the scope of work in Ecuador has also expanded over the past six years. Now, the program is able to provide clinical and preventive services in three locations. First, thanks to a number of collaborations and partnerships in the U.S. and in Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, the University of Kentucky Shoulder to Shoulder Ecuador program has been able to establish a permanent clinic site in Carlos Ruiz Burneo, a very poor urban neighborhood, or “barrio.” The clinic was named Centro Médico Hombro a Hombro (CMHH) - or Shoulder to Shoulder Medical Center. There are currently two physicians, a nurse, a psychologist, a dentist, a social worker and support staff who work as a team to improve the health of patients who seek care at the CMHH. Second, partnerships have been established with the Tsáchila people, a traditional indigenous group from the area who live in small, isolated rural communities outside the city limits. Third, the brigades are now working in the rural Andean region about two hours from Quito.

The establishment of the CMHH has been possible due to the efforts of a number of partner organizations which have offered support, skills, time and a true partnering of effort. This includes:

a) In the United States: the University of Kentucky, Christ the King Cathedral, Kiwanis Club of Lexington, UK Newman Center, IFMSA, UK Shoulder to Shoulder Student Club, Kentucky Ecuador Partners and the Jubileo Fund.

b) In Ecuador: U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers, Santo Domingo Kiwanis, CIMAS, FASCA, CRN, Los Rosales, Tsáchila leaders and lay health workers and

Universidad de San Francisco de Quito medical students.

Volunteers who serve on brigades often travel around to treat several groups during their stay. Now, however, longer clinical and learning experiences are underway. CMHH is not only the site of a permanent clinic, but it can also serve as clinical and research internship site for UK students. This year, pharmacy student Melinda Morgan spent a month in Santo Domingo doing her fourth year Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience at CMHH, and Alana Jonat, currently a second year medical student, spent a month at the clinic conducting a survey-based project researching women’s health. Several students are planning month-long internships for 2009.

The work of STSE has also led to new partnerships with Ecuadorian institutions, such as PUCE (one of the major national universities), USFQ and CIMAS, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of Andean communities.

In addition, school screenings and education programs are being implemented, and STSE is integrating with public health programs to provide immunizations, nutrition programs for pregnant women and children ages six months to three years, TB testing and treatment, cervical cancer screenings and more than 1,000 medical and dental visits a month.
How You Can Help

Hundreds of students, faculty, staff, community volunteers and clinicians have given of their time and resources to help change the lives of the people in Ecuador. To continue to expand our services, we need your help!

To find out more about donating financial resources, volunteering for an upcoming brigade, contributing necessary supplies, or other ways to help, contact Tom Young or Claudia Hopenhayn.

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Visit us online at:  
www.shouldertoshoulderky.org

A Letter From The Shoulder to Shoulder Ecuador Student Association

The Shoulder to Shoulder Ecuador Student Association has begun our inaugural year with several exciting projects. To date, we have held two meetings and enjoyed the opportunity to welcome many new members to the group. At these meetings, the membership has discussed potential service projects to carry out here in Lexington and in Santo Domingo, Ecuador. One such local service event planned for later this year is to create Christmas shoeboxes filled with hygiene products and some fun treats for underprivileged children living in Estill County, KY. In order to support our efforts locally and in Ecuador, we are also dedicating a great deal of time to planning several exciting new fund raisers. These fund raisers will provide funds for individual trip costs and for the supplies needed, and projects we will take on, during all three of the planned brigades scheduled for 2009. As the interest in the Shoulder to Shoulder Ecuador brigades grow, we are excited to see what the student association can do in Ecuador and here at home.

If you are interested in learning more about the Shoulder to Shoulder Ecuador Student Association or helping with any of our efforts please feel free to contact me at bwarrick1@uky.edu.

Sincerely,  
Brittany Warrick  
Shoulder-to-Shoulder Ecuador Student Association President

2009 STSE Brigade Dates

March 13 - 22, 2009  
May 15 - 24, 2009  
July 31 - August 9, 2009