Medical Center Shoulder to Shoulder (Centro Médico Hombro a Hombro (CMHH)) works in an urban marginalized community of Santo Domingo, Ecuador to benefit the most vulnerable members of the community. We offer multiple health services such as general medicine, nursing, pharmacy, dental care, and community health coordination. We strive to work in the community in health promotion, but are often limited by our circumstances. Handicapped patients have difficulty getting to the CMHH, the staff has limited time to make home visits, and high patient demand at CMHH are some of the factors that limit our health promotion activities in the community.

Together, FASCA, the University of Kentucky Shoulder to Shoulder Global, and the Kiwanis Club International decided to look for economic resources to purchase a vehicle in order to meet the patient needs for increased community-based care. A vehicle would permit increased access and time of CMHH staff to work in the community in health promotion activities.

The Kiwanis Club International and the Lexington Kiwanis donated funds towards the purchase of a vehicle, and the local Santo Domingo chapter of the Kiwanis club donated two roast pigs to CMHH to host a sale of traditional food as a fundraiser. Rich and Rita Mier and the Wes Allen Family made significant contributions and the additional funding helped CMHH reach the amount needed to acquire a used Ford truck. Likewise, CMHH staff looked for additional donations from community members to make this pig roast sale a success.

The CMHH team and partners organized a “Sale of Traditional Food” in Santo Domingo. The event was promoted in the community and in the neighborhood where CMHH is located. We requested food donations from community members and our patients so that we could prepare the meal. We received donations of live chickens, bananas, yucca, potatoes, salad ingredients and many other items!

We sold 367 meal tickets in total at a price of $2.50 per ticket. Our total profit after expenses was $840.46. FASCA employees and administration and community members assisted us in the sale of tickets. In addition we also sold sports clothing and other items donated by University of Kentucky medical brigades, earning an additional $555.50. In total we earned $1,396.96 towards the purchase of a vehicle for CMHH in one day!

Thank You Kiwanis and Partners for helping us reach the community with the purchase of our new truck and with our community outreach Pig Roast!
My Time in Santo Domingo

By Dr. Nick Nickl (UK gastroenterologist currently spending an eight month sabbatical in Santo Domingo Ecuador at Centro Medico Hombro a Hombro and working with the local public hospital)

I have now completed over half of my time in Santo Domingo, Ecuador. The last few of weeks have been especially stressful. I’ve begun making gastroenterology teaching and consult rounds with the medicine residents on Tuesdays and Thursdays after I finish endoscopy, and many of the hospitalized patients I see are very difficult. Two weeks ago it was a 45 year old man with the most advanced stomach cancer I have ever seen. So far nearly 10% of the endoscopy exams I’ve done here have found cancer (!), and nearly all are caused by H. pylori, a bacterial infection that comes from contaminated water. This is, therefore, an almost completely preventable disease; but dirty drinking water is the biggest health care problem on earth, which is why gastric cancer is the leading cause of cancer death worldwide. Besides this man’s youth, what made it personally difficult was that, as we stood in the hall discussing the situation, we were quickly surrounded by family who wanted to know about treatments. The residents stepped aside, and suddenly it was me, who had only met the man ten minutes earlier, explaining in broken Spanish that there were no treatments available in the world, and that he certainly had no more than a few weeks left. One by one the family drifted away to huddle together in a corner and hold one another together.

Then last Tuesday morning I arrived at the hospital to find a furious argument underway between Roxanna, the staff nurse regularly assigned to endoscopy, and the head nurse from the emergency room. The cause was the number of patients on the schedule: already twelve, and the ER wanted to add two more. Roxanna was livid, because the hospital is short staffed and there just aren’t enough nursing hours to assign to endoscopy. In fact, Roxanna herself is now volunteering unpaid; the hospital is running out of money and had to let her go (temporarily), but she is volunteering in endoscopy because she likes the work and thinks it’s important. I admitted that, while I’m prepared to work until all the patients are done, it’s really not possible to keep adding to the procedure list when the nurses are scheduled to leave at a fixed time (and one of them is unpaid besides!). The argument set the tone for a somber day, and sure enough we worked very late both Tuesday and Thursday to get through the schedule. I think at the core is the frustration everyone feels that there just aren’t enough resources to go around. The need is very great, and anyone who cares (such as a nurse who continues to work for free after the hospital has furloughed her) cannot help but be discouraged.

But most lingering in my mind is the 33 year old woman I saw in the Centro Médico: personable, attractive, and a bit hyper-dramatic. I was sure she had irritable bowel syndrome, but scheduled an endoscopy just to eliminate anything more serious before starting her on antidepressants. Sure enough, when I looked at her stomach last week she had only a touch of mild gastritis, nothing to worry about. Except, what’s that funny-looking spot up there, in that hard-to-see corner just below the esophagus? I washed it with a little water. Hmm, that’s not right. Wash again, wash some more. Oh, no!

All health care providers learn to establish a certain emotional distance from patients in order to maintain personal stability. But here the tragedies grab you by the collar and pull you in head first. The emotional roller coaster is becoming a bit difficult to negotiate: one day I’m enjoying a lively music concert in old town Quito, and another I’m telling a 33 year old mother of four she has cancer – knowing the cancer was completely preventable. It’s more than a little stressful. However, I know that my work here in Ecuador has been a blessing – not only to others but also in my own life.
Christmas for the Poorest of the Poor

By Sarah Dobra

Twas’ the week before Christmas, and the smiles of the poorest of the poor as they received a Christmas present donated by UK community members, ate their only nutritious meal of the week and sang and danced to Christmas music were the best Christmas presents of all.

Centro Médico Hombro a Hombro (CMHH) hosted a Christmas party for the poorest CMHH patients. Disabled children and adults and their families, elderly individuals (abuelo or abuela as CMHH kindly addresses these patients) without family and several children who would otherwise not have had Christmas were invited to Christmas festivities on December 16th, 2010.

It was truly an event in which the world becomes smaller, as internationally the UK community donated children’s toys and games, and locally the president of the local school parent’s association mobilized neighbors and community leaders to donate chickens (usually alive!), rice, vegetables and even a Santa Clause outfit for the party. CMHH staff and local community volunteers channeled all these efforts together, invited the neediest patients, decorated CMHH in Ecuadorian Christmas style, served a nutritious meal, organized games and, most importantly, showed these usually invisible members of society that they are not forgotten.

Paul Hernandez is the newest staff member at CMHH. He joined the staff in March 2009 as caretaker and he lives in a small cottage on the CMHH grounds and serves as a night watchman. During the day, he is responsible for the maintenance and cleaning of the CMHH and its grounds. Paul’s new project is to create an ornamental garden. Also, Paul is the driver of the vehicle recently acquired for CMHH (See first page). Paul is always ready to lend a helping hand to handicapped patients who need help getting up the stairs, to playing Santa Clause at the clinic’s Christmas party, to using the kitchen of his small cottage for staff lunches. His family frequently visits and his mother often cooks lunches for clinic staff. His guard-dog, a gentle Doberman named “Prix” is also a welcome addition to the clinic. Prior to joining STSG staff Paul worked in construction.

Ligia Morales has worked at Centro Médico Hombro a Hombro (CMHH) in Santo Domingo for three years as a nurse assistant. Her warm laugh and smile are contagious to patients and staff alike. “I do a little bit of everything,” Ligia commented. Her responsibilities include preparing patients for their doctor’s visit (height, weight, blood pressure, etc); collecting lab tests and exams; performing PAP exams; providing patient education and counseling on correct medication use; processing urine, glucose, hematocrit and pregnancy tests; assisting Dr. Cristian Carrion in medical procedures; and organizing and facilitating a community club for pregnant and nursing mothers and mothers of low-weight children. In her free time, Ligia loves to play basketball and plays the forward position with a local team. She would like to study nursing and is saving money in order to attend nursing school.
The power of service is unstoppable and meeting the August 2010 Shoulder to Shoulder brigade only reassured this longstanding belief. As we gathered together under the equator sun for the first time, not a single one of us realized the impending impact we were going to leave on the citizens of Ecuador and on one another.

The brigade spanned the first two weeks of August and included three clinic days at Centro Médico Hombro a Hombro in Santo Domingo, two days of clinic in local Tsa'chila communities, one day of clinic in the rural community of Salasaca, and several days of community service. Our group of nearly 40 U.S. participants and about 10 Ecuadorians who joined our team, was divided into service groups to provide physical exams in local schools, help with ground maintenance at the clinic, paint a mural at a school, and perform physical therapy in-home visits. No matter one’s background, there was plenty to do each day by each volunteer!

As a first year physician assistant student, I was not yet prepared to examine patients, so I served as a team medical interpreter secondary to my language and interpreting experience. I was able to participate in various aspects of the brigade, including the physical therapy home visits during the community service days.

The physical therapy program invested incredible effort in acquiring and distributing much-needed medical equipment to patients living in Santo Domingo who are unable to travel to the clinic. Among the services rendered, the PT team provided walkers and shoes for several children with developmental disabilities and a reclining wheel chair for a brother and sister with debilitating cerebral palsy. The young adult brother and sister were able to see the sunshine and leave their home through the gift of the wheelchair, graciously donated by a hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. The moment they glimpsed the sunshine for one of a few times in greater than twenty years of life, there was not a silent heart or untouched soul in the group. As a witness to the event, this encounter was nothing short of an absolute miracle. This was only one of countless lives touched during one brigade!

The communities we encountered welcomed us warmly and eagerly asked when we would return. The relationship that exists between the Ecuadorian communities and the University of Kentucky flourishes with each trip, and our relations continue to provide encouragement from which an oppressed community can succeed. Whether we are painting murals, playing fútbol, pulling teeth, or strengthening a tired musculoskeletal system, the impact that UK’s STSG leaves biannually is greater than any single one of us will ever know.
Tele-Medicine Allows Kentucky Providers to Treat Patients in Ecuador  
By Sarah Dobra and Rob Sprang

UK physical therapy faculty, Dr. Lynn English, used Tele-Medicine through the UK TeleHealth Network to provide a wheel-chair fitting consultation for CMHH patient, Angel Aguirre, a two and a half year old boy with cerebral palsy and developmental delay. This international, bi-lingual and cross-cultural exchange was made possible with the help of Rob Sprang, MBA, Director of Kentucky TeleCare Network, the Telehealth program at the University of Kentucky; Ronald Ikechi, the Peace Corps Volunteer at CMHH; Dr. Jaime Srinath, the Clinic Systems Coordinator for UK Healthcare; and Dr. Lynn English, who not only travelled to Ecuador with the donated wheelchair but also arranged for the chair-fitting with the child’s family and UK faculty.

With the success of this first telemedicine conference, future possibilities for applications between the UK and CMHH include:

* Administrative meetings: Face to face meetings and sharing computer-based presentations with Ecuador.

* Educational programs.: Ecuador can participate in UK educational programs such as Grand Rounds and any special programs created just for CMHH.

* Clinical services: With the addition of the camcorder, we can do high-resolution images for dermatology, wound care and other clinical services as well as activities that require gross motor movement observation, such as Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Language Pathology and other services.

Rob Sprang commented, “We can also use the technology to immerse our faculty and trainees into the Shoulder-to-Shoulder concept by allowing them to participate in this kind of mission outreach. Maybe they cannot physically travel there, but we can give them a taste of what it is like. Maybe this will raise consciousness of this work and more will consider going to Ecuador to work with the project. You can also take your camcorder and go outside the clinic, recording what you see in the community and then bring it back and play it through the video system for us to see.”

A Message from STSG-SA (Student Association)

The STSG-SA invites any UK student interested to join, whether you have gone or plan to go on one of the health brigades, or you are interested in the organization and in promoting its mission. We have great service and fundraising opportunities planned such as: sale of Ecuadorean crafts at the clinic and Farmer’s Market, restaurant nights, 5K race in October, and more. We raise funds to support specific efforts for the Ecuador clinic, and for students participating in the brigades.

If you are interested in learning more, or joining, please contact Mary Collins, president of STSG at mco226@uky.edu. Additionally, if you are a graduate or professional student and wish to participate in the recently started graduate liaison committee of STSG-SA, please contact Jessalyn Ubellacker, jessalyn.ubellacker@uky.edu.
We would also like to say thank you to all our donors…Shoulder to Shoulder Global could not function without your dedication and support.

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A very real and sincere thank you for your support!

For more information about how you can support STSG, please contact Dr. Tom Young (tyoung@uky.edu) or Dr. Claudia Hopenhayn (cmhope0@uky.edu).