



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jaime Wrigley, OSMC • 2310 California Road, Elkhart, IN 46514 • 574.970.4458

OSMC Surgeon Changing Lives in Guatemala

If you are suffering from a serious joint condition brought on by injury or osteoarthritis you have a number of good choices available here: intensive rehab, surgery, even joint replacement if that's the best solution. And the chances of a positive outcome are excellent.

But what if you live in a developing country like Guatemala? There your options aren't so good. Because the level and quality of medical care available is limited, you're likely looking forward to a life of debilitating pain and misery as your condition deteriorates.

Unless, that is, you're lucky enough to hear about doctors like Mark Klaassen, MD, an OSMC orthopedic surgeon who, along with a team of other medical professionals, visit countries like Guatemala as part of Operation Walk, a non-profit, volunteer medical organization that provides free surgical care for patients in third-world countries.

Klaassen just returned from his Guatemala tour and, though the team was able to be in country for only a few days, the work they accomplished was remarkable. Operation Walk surgeons and support staff replaced 72 knees, 26 hips, and performed 5 ankle and 10 foot surgeries. One ankle surgery was a Total Ankle Replacement, believed to be the first in Guatemala. In summary, 113 surgeries were performed on 76 patients. And for many, the outcomes will be life changing.

All supplies – the orthopedic implants, instruments, sterilization and radiology equipment, antibiotics, drugs and dressings – were donated, along with the time and talent of Klaassen and his medical team. Their work was coordinated through partnership with local doctors who provided logistical support, arranged hospital stays and staffing, and participated in patient care. And though Klaassen has now returned to his practice at OSMC, he will continue to follow his Guatemala patients, coordinating their post-operative care and rehab with local physicians.

The value of Klaassen's work extends beyond the benefit that individual patients receive. The Operation Walk program also serves to educate local surgeons, nurses, physical therapists and other medical professionals on the most up-to-date treatment options for joint disease.

Klaassen has a long history of working to advance the quality of orthopedic care available to citizens of developing countries. The son of missionaries, he grew up in Colombia where the positive impact of helping others was tightly woven into his character. Because of this childhood experience he is fluent in Spanish. He returned home to the U.S. as a 15-year-old to continue his education, culminating in the MD degree he earned from the Indiana University School of Medicine at Notre Dame and the I.U. Medical Center. He currently serves as Professor of Practice in the College of Sciences at Notre Dame.

To arrange a telephone or face-to-face interview with Dr. Klaassen, please contact Jaime Wrigley at OSMC. 574-970-4458.

###

