

OP WALK TALK

-A PUBLICATION FOR THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF OPERATION WALK DENVER

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A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear friends of Operation Walk Denver,

We have recently returned from our mission to Panama, filled with excitement, fatigue, and a sense of accomplishment. On our most productive mission to date, we completed a total of 66 total hip and knee replacements on a group of very disabled, yet appreciative, Panamanians. The complexity of the majority of the surgical cases certainly tested the skills of all of our medical team.

Seeing wheel chair bound patients walk within 48 hours of their surgery was most gratifying of all. Their determination was inspiring. While many patients were helped, the list of those truly in need of joint replacement surgery seems endless.

During our visit, the President and First Lady of Panama as well as representatives of the American Embassy in Panama met with me. All were greatly appreciative of our help and discussions often centered on how they could help facilitate future visits to Panama.

Our energy now focuses on the location and timing of our next mission. That means our focus must also be on planning our major fundraising gala on September 30, 2006. Our gala committee is spending countless hours to ensure this will be an enjoyable and memorable evening. I encourage you to place this date on your calendars.

Lastly, I thank you to many for their tireless effort and contributions to our trip to Panama, including the medical team, Porter Adventist Hospital for providing the necessary medical supplies, and DePuy, a Johnson and Johnson Company, for donating all of the hip and knee devices we implanted. I am most grateful for their compassion and dedication to Operation Walk Denver.

Sincerely,

Douglas A. Dennis, MD
Executive Director
Operation Walk Denver



PANAMA - A "Joint" Effort in a Country of Extremes

Panama is a land filled with incredible rainforests, snorkeling, birding and some of the best deep-sea fishing in the world. Panama is also a country forged by various cultures and traditions that come together to create a uniquely complex and exotic environment.

Its leadership and people are working hard to improve Panama's economy and implement nationwide health services. With over thirty percent unemployment, however, its people need help. Aware of, and sympathetic to these healthcare needs, OpWalk Denver traveled to Panama City in April of 2006.

The Mission begins six months prior to our departure date with dedicated personnel volunteering countless hours in preparation for the trip. There is nothing easy about putting together 8,000 pounds of cargo. Crate after crate consist of all equipment and medical supplies needed for 60-plus total joint replacement surgeries down to the last Band-Aid. Every crate has to be shipped in advance of the team's arrival.

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PANAMA - A "Joint" Effort in a Country of Extremes

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The Denver Team arrived at Santo Tomas Hospital Thursday morning ready to begin their work. The Panamanian doctors provided our team with a list of over 100 patients in need of total joint replacement. Their ages ranged from 20 to 70 years old. These patients were selected because their lives had been diminished due to the pain and debilitation brought on by trauma or arthritis. Their families brought a sack or suitcase of clothing and toiletries, hoping that their family member will be one of the ones selected.

Every potential patient is evaluated the first morning. Surgeon and internist teams assess the health and severity of the joint deterioration of each patient. Hours later, after much discussion, the OpWalk team determines the final **50-60** best candidates for this complex surgery. It is difficult to send some of the people home, but the excitement for the those who will receive a new joint or joints on this visit is electric.

With barely a break for lunch, the surgeons and their teams were off to the surgical suites to prep and begin the first surgeries of our visit. The team worked tirelessly, 12-hours per day, completing **over 65 total joint surgeries in three and a half days!** Operation Walk teamed with the Panamanian staff, teaching them the skills and technology of total joint surgery and patient care. Although the days were exhausting in the Panamanian heat and humidity, the long hours were rewarding in ways that will last a lifetime.

Thankfully, we had the exceptional support of Mr. Alfredo Meduro, a Panamanian businessman. Mr. Meduro helped coordinate our trip, which made everything run much more smoothly! He dedicated a large portion of his time, working alongside our team and spent countless hours in preparation for this trip. He assisted in the customs process

to bring our cargo successfully into his country. Local businesses donated daily meals for the OpWalk Team thanks to Alfredo's contacts in the community. Alfredo Meduro is our official Operation Walk **Ambassador Of Good Will!**

The trip was a great success! Operation Walk Denver is an unforgettable experience for any one willing to volunteer their time, passion and energy to help the less fortunate. You, our donors are important members of our team. **Thank you.**



Meet the Team

Jackie Gorman is a Colorado native who received her Bachelor's degree in Sports Sciences from the University of Denver and her Master's Degree in Biomechanics from the University of Oregon in Eugene. She then returned to the land of sunshine and mountains to work in various fields such as University of Northern Colorado Gymnastics Coach and instructor, physical therapy clinics and athletic training, and US Olympic Training Center research studies, before she found her niche as a Certified Surgical Technologist.



Jackie developed a true passion for the specialty of orthopedics at Lutheran Medical Center. Rose Medical center was the next stop where she still works one to two days a week as a surgical technologist. The remainder of her time is as a representative for DePuy, a Johnson & Johnson Company. This position entails supporting total joint replacement surgical procedures in the Denver metro area.

The opportunity to be a part of Operation Walk Denver has allowed Jackie to follow her two passions - helping people and traveling. She has participated in three missions with the Denver team, wearing several hats on these trips including Surgical Technologist, Central Processing, and Operating Room Coordinator. The most rewarding aspect of Operation Walk for Jackie is knowing that the patients are finally able to perform the most basic tasks. Just walking to work in order to provide for their families with their knee or a hip replacement is a huge triumph. "The hugs and tears of joy shed by both the patients and their families are so rewarding after a long hard day in the

operating room!"

Jackie is most thankful for the opportunities she has had to travel with Operation Walk Denver and hopes to continue doing so for a long time to come.

OpWalk Panama... The best part?

Angie Moss, Board Member

How does one choose a best or longest lasting memory when the entire trip was filled with generosity, humility, caring, hope, healing, smiles, happy tears, new flavors, language and culture?

I could go on about the first day at hospital. Upon arrival, we walked through a cafeteria-size lobby, filled with perhaps 200 hopeful folks wanting to be seen by the “American” doctors, many who traveled several hours from Colon and other poor regions of Panama. Although it was heartbreaking to know that not everyone could be treated on this one-week trip, I watched enthusiastically as a list was kept of those who would be seen on a future trip.

This same day, brought smiles to many faces as patients who received new joints, during the November 2005 OpWalk LA trip, returned for their ‘six-month check-ups.’ We were entertained by dancing exhibitions and the proud presentation of healed scars! Regardless of language barriers, the gratitude and overwhelming joy came through crystal clear. This was also a tremendous encouragement to the patients who were scheduled to have surgery throughout the week. The returning patients helped so much to quell fears of surgery, giving confidence of a pain-free life ahead.

Another heartening aspect of the trip was the individual patients. There was Luis Pimiental, a taro farmer whose family income was eroding due to his limited mobility. I remember Abdy whose hip carried a bullet, which he received in a political demonstration in the early 1980s. Additionally, Manuel Garcia, a young man in his mid-twenties, will know life anew. As a young teenager he damaged his knee in a soccer game, causing bone spurs the size of a cantaloupe. With over 45 patients being treated, and 66 total surgeries, the stories are too many to relate.

If I had to comment on one striking memory or most lasting impression, it would be the OpWalk Denver team. Without naming everyone individually, I would say that every single volunteer was indispensable. These folks gave their heart and soul to this mission. From the nurses and physical therapists to the surgeons, anesthesiologists, internists, physicians assistants, videographer and lay volunteers, **the mission was accomplished.** They did whatever it took.

These people gave up a week of vacation and time away from their families. They worked a minimum of 12 hours a day. They worked side-by-side with local medical personnel training in their individual specialties. They found something that needed to be done and did it. I saw a surgeon washing and drying instruments while waiting for an ER to be prepared for the next patient. A tour to the Panama Canal was foregone by several of the team, so that more patients could receive the surgeries they needed.

Our OpWalk surgeons are the best of the best in our nation. Many give lectures all over the world and have been honored with the highest awards, yet egos and economics were set aside and humility was the name of the trip. The patients came first.

What I saw was a true giving spirit in our OpWalk team. I am proud to be a part of a group where every penny and more is given to the actual goal and purpose of the organization. Thank you to all for an unforgettable experience! Angie



A Gentleman Named Sebastian

Kathy Jones, RN

Of all the awesome experiences we encounter in our lives, I can easily say for me that being a member of Operation Walk has been the most rewarding! This memory remains treasured in my heart.

There was a group of seven men in my room. I oversaw one of the eight rooms of men and women who had waited many years for a joint replacement. This group of people was chosen because they were most in need. They had spent years, even decades, trying to manage their pain. The graciousness and appreciation they showed to us was so heartfelt. It was a privilege to be a part of their lives, even for a short time.

Sebastian Manuel stands out in my memories. His surgery wasn't scheduled until the fourth and final day. He needed both hips replaced and had difficulty walking even short distances in his hospital room. I never heard one word of complaint from him.

In the meantime, he spent each day assisting his roommates. Sebastian became my personal interpreter while I was there. He was stoic and always smiling; the needs of his friends came first. There were a couple of times when there were difficulties with other patients. Sebastian would clamor from his bed and hobble over to assist me with teaching and translation.

One of his final statements to me as we said goodbye was “Oh my, I am so blessed and cannot thank this group enough. I pray to have my second hip to be done somehow next year. But even now I can go home and care for my wife and children as I would like to.” A true gentleman!



Operation Walk Presents Their First Annual Walk of Dreams Gala — Operation Couture



Walking, running, bending, kneeling, are all daily activities that most of us take for granted without a second thought. Unfortunately, these acts and movements are nearly impossible for others. As we discovered in our mission trips around the world, people in developing countries endure debilitating hips and knee pain for years without any hope of relief.

So many individuals around the world dream daily of walking someday without pain. However when realizing the cost, this is a dream beyond their reach. Because of generous donors and supporters like you, that dream is and can continue to be a reality.

On Saturday, September 30, 2006, the **Walk of Dreams** inaugural gala will be held at the Grand Hyatt in downtown Denver. Dinner, Live Auction, and a fabulous Fashion Show provided by Saks 5th Avenue will fill the evening! You will even have a live auction opportunity to bid on joining Operation Walk's team on a mission.

Make plans now to join us for an enchanting evening with our special MC's, guest models and your friends. Save the date!

Your presence at our Gala will help transport our team of physicians, nurses, physical therapists and surgical technologists as well as helping to provide all the equipment, supplies, and medication needed to complete fifty to sixty joint replacement surgeries during our week long missions.

Table sponsorships are available for corporate and individual friends of Operation Walk Denver. If you are interested in becoming one of the event sponsors, please call Deana Alfonso at the Foundation, 303-715-7613.