

Dear Friends,

Along with many of you, I have watched in sadness the scenes of devastation caused by the January 2010 earthquake that leveled the capital of Haiti. My response was to want to find a way to help. I am a huge fan of Partners in Health, an organization founded by Dr. Paul Farmer that has been working in Haiti for years, and another organization called PAZAPA with local connections to my community. My plan is to help them financially both now and into the future because we know that recovery in Haiti will need years of support.

One thing this situation made clear to me was how much we are a global community and that when people of any nation suffer—be it from natural disaster, social or political oppression, poverty, or health care inequities—we are all affected.

Those of us working in under-developed countries vulnerable to natural disasters are reminded of how quickly catastrophes can strike and worsen an already difficult situation. We at HCI are passionate about working to provide a model for the delivery of high-quality health care in Nicaragua so that local health care providers have the capacity to help when disasters strike. In this newsletter you will read about the challenges of providing adequate surgical care to children in developing countries and how we are working to improve this care of children in Nicaragua through our partnership with La Mascota Hospital. We are grateful for our many generous donors and volunteers who have allowed us to make a difference in the lives of so many children. We ask for your continued support so that together we can make a difference.



Sheryl Snyder  
President



Sylvia was two years old when volunteer surgeons from Hope Clinic International performed surgery for a congenital defect. She is now a healthy nine year old.

Save the Date!

Tim's Concert

June 27, 2010

6:30-9:00 PM

Frutig Farm

Ann Arbor, Michigan



The entrance to Tim's Clinic reads in English; "When Tim was young, he said that his first question to God when he got to heaven would be, 'How many hairs are on my head?' This passage from Luke 12 tells us how intimately God our Father knows, loves and cares for us. Our hope is that Tim's Clinic will be a sign of this love and care to all."

At right:: Staff of Tim's Clinic, both volunteer and paid



# Surgical Care of Children: A Neglected Service in Developing Countries

There is nothing more moving than stories of children with life-threatening injury, disease, or congenital defects who are suddenly saved from disability or early death by the hands of a skilled surgeon. Many of us who have been privileged to be members of a surgical team can tell you what an amazing thing it is to be a part of some child's miracle.

The tragedy for children in countries such as Nicaragua is that surgical care has often been viewed as too expensive and as a non-essential service. Parents in poor countries wait for word of the next surgical team to visit in the hopes they can get the care their child desperately needs. But what happens to those children who need urgent or emergency care who can't wait for the next team to arrive? A bulletin of the World Health Organization published October 2002 states: "**poor surgical care results in significant numbers of deaths and disability in developing nations.**" The bulletin went on to say, "**A major problem with pediatric surgical care is that there is a general lack of knowledge in the care of children with surgical conditions...[and] there is a chronic shortage of qualified pediatric surgeons.**"

Even when expert surgeons arrive in these countries, many times the facility, drugs, diagnostic equipment and supplies needed to handle complex cases are nonexistent ; this leaves no alternative but to appeal to US hospitals for charity care. While major studies have focused on the impact on child health from infectious diseases, poverty, unsafe water and malnutrition, there are few studies documenting the impact of surgical diseases on children.

Hope Clinic International has experienced first-hand the untold suffering of children who received inadequate surgical care and the frustration of local surgeons without the ability to help; either because of a lack of essential equipment, drugs and other supplies or because of the lack of training. On our first mission trip in 2000, HCI became aware of the urgent need for help in caring for children with anorectal defects. This is a defect occurring late in the development of the fetus that is much more prevalent for children in Nicaragua than in the US. Without surgical repair of this defect children are doomed to lifelong ostracism and social isolation.

This June HCI will again send a surgical team to La Mascota Children's Hospital in Managua. We are excited about our partnership with Dr. Alfredo Valle and the opportunity to work with him and the surgeons he is training to improve their ability to care for the surgical needs of children, especially those with this defect. In spite of the serious socioeconomic problems that exist in Nicaragua, the surgical care of children can be improved there. Progress can only occur, however, if more people become aware of the urgent need for underdeveloped nations to be able to meet the basic surgical needs of their children.



Above: Pediatric surgery patient Gisele and her mother. Right: Wilfredo, who was treated for a congenital defect.



Sheryl Snyder delivers supplies for the NICU.



Left: Dr. Cathie Burnweit is a pediatric general surgeon from Miami Children's Hospital. Below: Drs. Valle, Lelli and Fitzpatrick working together.

