

effort, which resulted in the opening of a new clinic in Lima.

"In 2002, my whole family and I went to Lima, where I spent a week in the clinic seeing patients," he says. That year, the technicians returned to the United States for another 12 weeks to learn more advanced skills, and are now delivering about 25 free prostheses each year through the Lima clinic. (Stan Harrison pays for materials and technician salaries; Limbs for Life provides most of the components.)

Eberidge has found that the emotional payoff in contributing his time and services is somewhat delayed. "When you're over there, you're concentrating on the proper fit, just like at home," he says. "You don't get that warm feeling that you're doing humanitarian work because you're so focused on the work. It doesn't hit you until later."

Dino Scario and the FOOT Foundation

Dino Scario, CO, is an orthotist at Shriners' Hospital for Children in Tampa. After several years of charity work for Lou Gehrig's disease, Scario realized his real interest was to contribute through OMP. "I wanted to make a humanitarian trip somewhere," he says.

In 2006, Scario and his wife, Lisa, decided to raise money to benefit both a Florida charity and fund an overseas trip. They established a foundation, the Florida OMP

Outreach Team (FOOT), and hosted a wine-pairing party fundraiser. With donated food and wine, the party netted enough to sponsor his first trip to Guatemala in May 2008 and to purchase speech therapy equipment for Shriners' Hospital.

Before heading south, Scario did his homework. He decided the most effective approach was to operate through an established organization in the area and approached Physicians for Peace (PPP), which was working in a children's hospital in Guatemala City. PPP agreed to host a prosthetics clinic for the foundation. Scario was attracted to PPP in part because of its attention to education. "They believe in educating existing teams in the area so they can cope with follow up after we've left," explains Scario.

FOOT and the PPP team began screening patients a year in advance, exchanging e-mails and digital pictures to identify patients and determine needed components.

Scario solicited component donations from manufacturers and assembled a team of volunteers, matching their skills to the patients' needs. The six-member group, which included a translator who also was an occupational therapist, spent five days at the hospital, treating five hip disarticulations, three transfemoral amputations, one transtibial amputation, and one below-ankle symes amputation. The team also evaluated a number of children for a future orthotics clinic.

Scario considered the trip to be a huge success and learning experience. "When you're there, you have to make it work with what you have on hand," he says. "You can't just call the local rep."

FOOT's goal is to make an outreach trip every other year, using intervening time to raise funds. As in his first effort, Scario plans to raise money for a Florida charity as well as overseas clinics. He is reluctant to top the same vendors every year and intends to focus on refurbishing and reusing as many donated components as possible.



Dino Scario (left) observes a patient learning to use his new hip prosthesis.

The FOOT Foundation's next trip will focus on orthotics. Based on his experience in Guatemala, Scario won't take prefabricated braces since they do not meet the needs of most of his patients. In addition, he says, "They are not durable enough and tools and supplies are limited, which makes it challenging to repair or replace the braces." He prefers to fabricate custom orthoses on site. "Hard-core components like side bars, knee and ankle joints, and hinges for elbows are far more beneficial."

Scario is considering going to Cuba or Belize or returning to Guatemala, depending on the political atmosphere and the safety of his team. Cuba or Belize would mean working without a host organization. He says he would be honored to work with groups like Physicians for Peace again, but "now that I've learned, I probably will go out on my own." ❧

Deborah Coon is a contributing writer for OMP Almanac. Reach her at debc@omponet.net.



For more information about the organizations in this article, and to learn how to contribute your time, money, or expertise, visit their Web sites:
www.prosthetics.com
www.pppinc.com/nextto.htm
www.limbsforlife.org