

Celebrating Three Decades of Medical Mission Work

SIGN volunteer surgeon Larry Hull, MD, honored with Humanitarian Award

NEW ORLEANS—The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) presented today the 2010 Humanitarian Award to Larry Dale Hull, M.D., of Centralia, Washington, at its 2010 Annual Meeting. This award honors Fellows of the Academy who have distinguished themselves by providing outstanding musculoskeletal care, both in the United States and abroad. In addition, this award recognizes those orthopaedic surgeons who help to improve the human condition by alleviating suffering and supporting and contributing to the basic human dignity of those in need.

“I am surprised and very thankful to be receiving this award,” said Dr. Hull, who also serves as a volunteer surgeon for SIGN. “What I am most grateful for and what I get the most energy out of is seeing patients who are in need of medical care recover so that they can get back into the wonderful journey of life.”

Dr. Hull is the third surgeon connected to SIGN to win the AAOS Humanitarian Award. Lewis G. Zirkle Jr., M.D., SIGN founder and president, won the award in 2007 and SIGN volunteer surgeon Richard Coughlin, M.D., was the 2006 recipient.

After completing his residency in orthopaedic surgery at the University of Washington School of Medicine, Dr. Hull founded the Washington Orthopaedic Center in Centralia, Wash., in 1973. Three years later, he began making medical mission trips, bringing orthopaedic and primary care to underserved populations in Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and El Salvador. Dr. Hull has completed nearly 40 medical mission trips since 1976.

“He has given his time, his talents, his energy, his heart and his resources in a selfless service of healing,” said Jim Radcliffe, MD, chief of staff of Kudjip Nazarene Hospital. “He has been a great blessing to us and to the people of Papua New Guinea.”

“I believe that not only can I touch lives medically, but I can also help them in other areas of need,” said Dr. Hull. An example of this belief is the coffee plantation he and his wife Aarlie own in Papua New Guinea, employing hundreds of people in the area.

Dr. Hull and Aarlie collaborated with coffee roasters and friends to build a school, put in nine wells to supply clean water preventing childhood infection and death, and built a fully staffed medical clinic on the plantation. The medical clinic has 10,000 patient visits, vaccinates upwards of 5,000 children per year and offers health education emphasizing proper nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and sanitation issues. Observing that the schools in the Waghi valley around the plantation did not have books, the Hulls initiated a book drive with coffee roasters from all across the U.S. In spring 2010, a container of more than 50,000 books will arrive at the plantation and be distributed to school libraries.

Dr. Hull and his office have funded and provided SIGN equipment for the Kudjip Nazarene Hospital, which serves the Western Highlands Providence of Papua New Guinea and the Government Hospital Gaspar Garcia Lavinana in Rivas, Nicaragua.

“Deep from in my heart I want to thank you for the help you have provided us and our hospital,” stated Dr. Edgard Guzman, Orthopedic Department Chief, of Hospital Gaspar Garcia in Rivas, Nicaragua in a letter to Dr. Hull. “Formerly we were unable to treat fractures and other complicated orthopedic problems in our economically poor patients. Without the help of the electric drills, nails, orthopedic plates, screws, equipment for hips, knees and circulation, partial and total prostheses for hips and knees, the nails that you provided and a lot of other things, it would have been very difficult to treat trauma and orthopedic problems in our hospital. We hope that God will continue to grant you good health so that you can continue helping the poorest of the world,” Dr. Guzman added.

Dr. Hull has been the recipient of many other honors, such as the Physician of the Year award from Providence Centralia Hospital, the Northwest Nazarene University Alumnus of the Year award and the International Nazarene Church Good Samaritan award.