Surgical Mission Brings Relief To Nigerians

PRNewswire/ -- The GEANCO Foundation, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving healthcare delivery for the people of Nigeria, is organizing a medical mission for two surgeons and fifteen support team members to travel to the West African country to provide orthopaedic treatment to patients suffering from disabling joint diseases. Zimmer Holdings, Inc. is supporting the mission by donating orthopaedic implants and other surgical products.

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country, but the prevailing standard of specialty healthcare, including orthopaedics, is extremely poor. Less than 200 trained orthopaedic surgeons currently practice in a country of more than 160 million people and their services are undermined by weak infrastructure. As a result of limited access to domestic care, Nigerians currently spend more than $900 million annually on healthcare abroad, further diminishing investment in local infrastructure and medical training programs.

The GEANCO Foundation was established in 2005 by Dr. Godwin Onyema, MD and his family, with the long-term goal of improving the standard of care in Nigeria through the establishment of a world-class hospital facility in the country. This facility would demonstrate the value of investment in local healthcare by the government and domestic benefactors, and would provide much-needed training to Nigerian healthcare professionals, administrators and others.

As the Foundation works to establish this facility, it coordinates medical missions to demonstrate to the Nigerian community the benefits of specialty healthcare and to make an immediate impact on the lives of Nigerians suffering from debilitating diseases. "Our medical missions to Nigeria are an essential part of our long-term program to provide Nigeria with a truly world-class medical care facility," said Afam Onyema, Chief Operating Officer of the GEANCO Foundation. "Delivering sustainable, specialty healthcare to Nigerians will require the commitment of many organizations and individuals, and we are deeply appreciative of the enthusiasm and dedication of the surgeons and support personnel participating in our outreach missions."

This year's mission will see two orthopaedic surgeons from the OrthoCarolina Group in Charlotte, North Carolina, and the Panorama Orthopedics & Spine Center in Westminster, Colorado, travel to Nigeria to perform joint replacement surgeries on more than 40 patients from across Anambra State, a region of more than four million people serviced by a single orthopaedic practitioner. In July, the surgeons traveled to Nigeria for a pre-mission trip to assess patient cases and plan for the upcoming surgeries.

"These communities are in desperate need of orthopaedic care - in response to the mission's outreach via radio, text-messaging and word of mouth, more than 200

patients applied to participate in this program," said Dr. Neil Sheth, a surgeon with the OrthoCarolina Group. "The severity of the cases we have seen in Nigeria is astonishing and we are looking forward to helping a number of these patients return to productive and active lives free from chronic pain."

For more information on the GEANCO Foundation, visit www.geanco.org [1].

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