Donations Make Knee Replacements Possible

(BUSINESS WIRE) At a time many Americans devote to counting their blessings, a group of underprivileged patients in Veracruz, Mexico are thankful to be regaining the most critical aspects of rural life – their mobility and livelihood. In a hospital with a limited history of joint replacement surgeries, 12 patients experienced the spirit of giving firsthand through in-kind donations from orthopaedic surgeons and staff representing the Walk Strong Foundation and Gainesville, Florida-based medical device manufacturer, Exactech. This was the third of 20 planned trips to the Regional Specialty Hospital of Veracruz over a 10-year period.

“Many medical mission trips are doing great work, but oftentimes they are a one-time trip,” said Michael J. Christie, MD, orthopaedic surgeon and co-founder of Walk Strong. “We see many opportunities to elevate the standard of care and provide continuing benefits to community residents and medical care providers; our goal is to make a lasting impact.” Exactech donated its Optetrak total knee implants and instruments for the medical mission, which offers solutions to total knee replacement, including special options like constrained components and stems, which help address complex cases.

“The Veracruz Mission is aligned with Exactech’s global commitment to medical education and advancing the quality of care to patients around the world,” said David Petty, president of Exactech. “It’s our core purpose to help people maintain their activity and independence. We are proud to be a part of this mission and to extend our purpose by helping indigent patients in Veracruz.”

In each weeklong trip, the surgical team has been able to perform anywhere from nine to 22 knee replacement surgeries, present daily lectures for the hospital staff and residents and conduct patient care training for the families. Project C.U.R.E., a non-profit organization that works with recipient partner organizations to donate medical supplies and equipment to hospitals in more than 120 developing countries, helped deliver all of the necessary supplies and equipment for the trip.

“While millions of patients have access to joint replacement and quality of care, there are many challenges in developing countries,” W. Douglas Jackson, PhD, JD, president and CEO of Project C.U.R.E. “The Veracruz mission is really something special, a true team effort to help provide self-sustained healthcare in an area of Mexico that lacks the quality of care they need in their community.”

The patients were incredibly grateful for the opportunity to regain their mobility with their new Optetrak knee. One patient suffered from a severe varus deformity and found it difficult to take even one step; now he stands a little taller with pride in his new knee. Another patient is thankful to get back to selling her homemade tamales as a Mexican street vendor and performer.

The next trip is scheduled for Spring 2013.

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