Humanitarian Award Winning Surgeon To Discuss Trauma Surgery Techniques in Developing Countries

RICHLAND, Wash. Orthopaedic surgeons and medical residents with Legacy Emmanuel Medical Center and Oregon Health & Science University will learn the significant challenges of performing trauma surgery in developing countries. Orthopaedic surgeon and founder of the Richland-based SIGN Fracture Care International, Dr. Lewis Zirkle, will speak in Portland today to attendees to discuss clinical cases and groundbreaking surgical implant procedures used to treat trauma victims throughout the developing world.

“In many parts of the world fractures often go untreated, leading to permanent disability and long-term hardships for the injured and their families,” said Zirkle. “With more than 50 percent of the world’s population sustaining on less than $2 per day, a disabled family member who cannot work may drag the entire family further into poverty for as many as three generations.”

SIGN Fracture Care International, an orthopaedic humanitarian aid organization, provides training to help surgeons provide effective fracture repair to the poor. Dr. Zirkle developed the innovative surgical implants, instruments and techniques to provide fracture treatment for impoverished people in developing countries. SIGN implants and techniques are now used by 5,000 surgeons in 273 hospitals worldwide.

The training and implant nails are primarily donated to under-resourced hospitals in developing countries for the surgeons’ use. As the surgeons become proficient in the technique, they teach other surgeons in their hospital to help countries become self-sustaining.

SIGN board member Randall Huebner helps support the international training and bring awareness to this important work.

“Our mission is to collaborate with surgeons in developing countries to deliver training and implants that support their efforts to provide effective orthopaedic surgery to the poor,” said Huebner. “This is standard in our country but in many parts of the world a fracture can go untreated for years. With this support, surgeons can treat more patients and hasten healing so they can return to work and resume care and feeding of their families.”

The SIGN IM Nail System is comprised of intramedullary nails (implants), which are held in place with interlocking screws to correct and help heal fractures. However, the implant and surgery techniques are uniquely designed for use in facilities that do not have reliable electricity, real-time X-ray or other exploratory equipment to locate proper placement of interlocking screws. This allows the surgeon to rely on their tactile senses by using a mechanical device called a slot finder in conjunction with a targeting device to ensure proper implant and screw placement.

“This is quite personal for me. I’ve seen the lives that SIGN’s implants and surgery techniques literally help save by providing a practical and life altering solution to heal fractures for the poor in many parts of the world,” added Huebner. “Doctors who volunteer and people who donate time and funds help greatly increase the impact of SIGN’s vital worldwide humanitarian efforts.”

About SIGN Fracture Care International: SIGN Fracture Care International is dedicated to creating equality of fracture care throughout the developing world. Founded in 1999 by Dr. Lewis Zirkle, SIGN works with surgeons in 53 developing countries treating the injured poor. The organization designs, manufactures and provides orthopaedic implants for use in under resourced hospitals, with the majority of implants donated. The SIGN IM Nail System has enabled surgeons to treat 130,000 patients. SIGN is known for creative and innovative designs and received the 2013 Patent for Humanity Award. Learn more about SIGN's worldwide humanitarian efforts by visiting: www.signfracturecare.org.

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Reporter/Editor Note: SIGN founder Dr. Lewis Zirkle, Portland orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Richard Gellman with Legacy Emanuel Medical Center and SIGN Board Member Randall Huebner and are available for phone interviews on both Friday and Saturday. Photos and B-Roll of the SIGN workshop training and fracture care around the world are available at:


Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zeu6bwN2w&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zeu6bwN2w&feature=youtu.be)