



## *SIGN honors all physicians on Doctors' Day, March 30th.*

*Thank you for your support as we empower doctors and patients in developing countries.*

## Empowering Rural Surgeons

*By Lewis G. Zirkle, MD*

The SIGN method of empowering surgeons in developing countries to treat the poor was tweaked during a conversation in Myanmar last fall. An excellent SIGN Surgeon had been reassigned by the government to a rural hospital. He traveled 16 hours by public transportation to attend the orthopaedic conference in Yangon. He was discouraged because he had no way to stabilize fractures in his new hospital. It was impossible for

the patients to travel to another SIGN Hospital because of the distance and poverty in the community. He missed doing SIGN Surgery.

The idea came to us to start a Mobile SIGN Program, in which a SIGN Set would be shared among different hospitals in rural Myanmar. Dr. Aung supervises the SIGN Programs throughout Myanmar and has accompanied the SIGN Set to four new hospitals, teaching

the doctors how to use the SIGN Implant System.

The surgeons in these rural hospitals have successfully treated difficult fractures using SIGN Implants. I feel fortunate to be associated with dedicated surgeons like those in the Mobile SIGN Program. I also feel fortunate that many doctors understand and support our mission. We continue to expand based on the support. It is a great honor that you support us.



*Dr. Aung (holding suitcase) is bringing access to SIGN Surgery to hospitals in rural Myanmar.*

# Myanmar: Mobile SIGN Program

By Jeri Rosenthal, Lead Program Coordinator

Dr. Aung Thein Htay and the Myanmar Mobile SIGN Program have been busy. In less than two months, Dr. Aung and his team have visited four hospitals and performed 10 SIGN Surgeries for patients living as far as 500 miles away from Yangon, the largest city in Myanmar and Dr. Aung's hometown.

With a Samsonite suitcase to protect their precious cargo, Dr. Aung and his team began riding from hospital to hospital by bus. They are training local surgeons, so that in the future the suitcase can be

shipped between 10 rural hospitals, as needed. This will bring SIGN Surgery to patients who could not afford to travel for their medical care.



Dr. Aung Thein Htay travels by bus with the Mobile SIGN Set to rural hospitals.

Here are a few of Dr. Aung's reports from the Mobile SIGN Program:

## Gantgaw Hospital

A patient sustained a severe femoral shaft fracture from a traffic accident. Usually, a patient with this type of severe femur fracture would be transferred to a larger hospital, but the Mobile SIGN Program helped the patient receive SIGN Surgery in his own town, one week after the accident.

## Tharrawaddy Hospital

A patient living in a village near Tharrawaddy sustained a humerus fracture after falling from a cart seven years ago. The fracture went untreated and he became disabled. He could not afford or find proper treatment for his fracture. Fortunately, the Myanmar

Mobile SIGN Program has been posted about on Facebook. The patient's local governor contacted the Myanmar Mobile SIGN Team through Facebook, and the surgery was arranged.

## Kawthaung Hospital

Kawthaung is a town in the south of Myanmar, close to Thailand. Motorcycles are a popular transportation vehicle, and traffic accidents are common. An orthopaedic surgeon at Kawthaung Hospital contacted the Mobile SIGN Team to take care of two patients who sustained long bone fractures in a traffic accident. The Mobile SIGN Team worked with the staff of Kawthaung Hospital and a guest orthopaedic surgeon from Regional Military Hospital to provide SIGN Surgery for these patients.

## Phone Follow-up

One big challenge in treating patients who live in rural areas—and far from hospitals—is follow-up care. Many patients cannot afford to travel to the hospital in a big city for multiple appointments.

To overcome this challenge, Dr. Aung is following up with some patients through tele-medicine. Patients are able to get x-rays at a local facility and send the images via text for Dr. Aung to review and provide follow-up care. He hopes to expand this use of technology to make his time more efficient and lower the overall cost of care for his patients.



## Surgeons Inspire Innovation

Dr. Thet Maung Maung (center) inspired the Mobile SIGN Program when he mentioned the need for SIGN to Dr. Zirkle and Dr. Aung at the November SIGN Conference in Yangon. Dr. Maung traveled

by bus for 16 hours to attend the course—the same form of transportation that his patients would have to take to get care.

Now that Dr. Maung is stationed in a rural area, he no longer has the equipment to care for patients with badly broken bones. The number of patients he sees is too low to warrant a set, so the idea arose to have a SIGN Set that could be sent around the country and be used by SIGN

Surgeons in rural areas. Here Dr. Maung stands with San Yu, the first patient treated with the Mobile SIGN Program.



## SIGN Empowering Surgeons & Patients in South Sudan



Only two weeks after breaking both femurs, Mary is walking with Dr. Mapuor.

Mary Ikoi, 26, is a mother of three and seven months pregnant. She lives in Torit, a rural community in South Sudan that has experienced widespread food insecurity, bordering on famine, since 2017. She had nothing to feed her children, so she climbed a tree to pick leaves that she could cook into a paste. She fell from the tree, breaking both of her femurs.

She was totally incapacitated. Her family's already dire situation had become much worse. Four days after her injury, she was brought to Juba Teaching Hospital, where Dr. Mapuor Mading was able to fix both of her legs with SIGN Fin Nails.

"I didn't know that I would ever walk again," Mary says. "I thought the child in my womb would have a mother that could not walk."

Just 10 days after surgery, Mary is walking and her pregnancy is progressing well.

***"This story is the essence of SIGN. SIGN empowers surgeons who treat the poor in developing countries. SIGN Surgery empowers patients like Mary to heal and resume their former lives. Because of donors like you, surgeons can provide operations free of charge and see the smiles of many grateful patients."*** —Dr. Zirkle



CELEBRATION

April 19, 2019, at **SIGN**

**10:30-11:30am**

Light Snack — Spudnuts,  
Some Bagels, and Fruit

**11:30am-1:00pm**

Celebration Program

**1:00-2:30pm**

Museum and Interactive Displays

**FREE Event, RSVP Requested**

Text: **SIGN20** to **41444**

Email: [cari.exarhos@  
signfracturecare.org](mailto:cari.exarhos@signfracturecare.org)

Call Cari: **(509) 371-1107**

**Please RSVP by April 15, 2019**



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Save the Dates

**WINE & DINE**  
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September 21, **Portland, OR**  
Portland Art Museum

October 12, **Tri-Cities, WA**  
Three Rivers Convention Center

**Contact SIGN**

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