Jim Cho, MD

In Cacacollo, foot infections are extremely common as people cannot afford shoes. Dr. Cho (CENTER) cleans a boy's infected foot and Cho's wife Maria (RIGHT) translates. A small room in a church was used as a clinic.

Eisenhower Medical Center Internal Medicine physician, Jim Cho,MD, completed his third mission trip to Peru traveling with 25 members of the Orange Central Korean Seventh-day Adventist Church of Anaheim on a 12-day excursion from June 29 to July 10, 2009. In addition to Dr. Cho, the team was comprised of an optometrist, two nurses, two pastors and 20 church members.

The group was based out of Cuzco, a southeastern city in the Andes mountain range. "We took the first day to get acclimated to the 11,000 foot elevation," says Cho. "From there, we set out to spend several days working at three outlying villages including Huasao, Urcos and Cacacollo."

The mission group saw on average 100 medical and 100 optometry patients daily. "I treated children as young as eight months old to a gentleman who was 100 years old," says Cho. "We screened for diabetes, hypertension, urinary tract symptoms, stomach issues and upper respiratory infections. Surprisingly, many of the people are in fairly good health. However, we did see a lot of aches and pains. These people do a lot of farming in this region and work in the hills, so they presented with those types of problems quite a bit." In addition, the medical team did some basic education on hygiene and the importance of drinking water.

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"I think the thing that stood out for me on this trip was a little kid who had a rash on his face that he had had for a long time. He was a pretty social kid but he didn't go to school because he was ridiculed. I tried to help him with the problem and hope to find out from a friend if he is getting better. That is one of the stories that really touched me during this visit."

Dr. Cho, who has been with Eisenhower Medical Center for 10 years, first journeyed to Peru in 2005. "The reason I became a doctor in the first place was really to do missionary work. A lot of people in these areas have never seen a doctor before. Just going there and being of some help is humbling," says Dr. Cho. "It is not even just about providing the physical help but being able to counsel them as well and get some help for them…to make a significant difference in their lives. We often take younger kids and teenagers from our church with us on these trips as well. It gives us an extraordinary chance to teach and offer them a different perspective on life. I just feel that having the opportunity to help people in this way, in turn, I receive quite a blessing from it."

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