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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **OWENSBORO ANESTHESIOLOGIST SUPPORTS A U.S. SURGICAL TEAM DURING A HUMANITARIAN MEDICAL MISSION TO NICARAGUA**

***Dr. Alex Meza was one of 63 doctors and support personnel from across the U.S. who joined Rancho Mirage, Calif.-based International Medical Alliance on a 10-day mission to Somoto, Nicaragua in early August***

OWENSBORO, Ky., Sept. 1, 2010 – In his role as a staff anesthesiologist at Owensboro Medical Health System, Dr. Alex Meza has access to some of the finest surgical equipment in the world.

But when he joined Rancho Mirage, Calif.-based International Medical Alliance on a 10-day medical mission to Nicaragua last month, Dr. Meza got a glimpse of what surgery is like in much of the Third World.

“The most striking difference is the sheer abundance of all the equipment that is available here and the immediacy of its availability,” he said. “In Nicaragua, every day we tallied up the surgeries to the resources we had on hand and proceeded with great attention to how our stock of supplies was holding out. At my home hospital, by contrast, there is seldom if ever any doubt that I will have all that I need immediately available to me.”

This is a big deal when it comes to anesthesia.

“Much of anesthesia is about the little details, and in Nicaragua we could not take any of those details for granted,” he said, adding, “Having to constantly monitor how much oxygen was in our tanks was a stark contrast to the U.S., where we seldom if ever pause to consider if we might be more parsimonious in our oxygen utilization.”

Dr. Meza, it should be noted, is no stranger to the developing world. The son of American parents, he was born in Ecuador and grew up in Brazil and Colombia before moving to the U.S. with his family at the age of 16. He has also participated in several IMA medical missions to Latin America, including three previous trips to Ecuador, and serves on the organization’s board of directors.

During his early August medical mission to Nicaragua, Dr. Meza worked with a team of 63 doctors and support personnel from across the U.S. who literally improved the lives of thousands of impoverished Nicaraguans.

Their patients included a six-year-old girl, Aysel Iraña Galeano, who couldn't walk because of a birth defect involving the tendons in her left foot, and 35-year-old Jose Fernando Toruño, who needed reconstructive surgery on his skull after suffering massive head injuries in a motorcycle accident.

Nicaraguan doctors had cut a hole in his head to stop his intracranial bleeding, but an infection later forced them to remove part of his forehead, leaving a baseball size area of his frontal lobe without any protection other than a thin layer of skin.

Then there was 67-year-old Santos de Cruz Meza. Born with a cleft lip, her deformity worsened with age, twisting her nose while the top of her mouth produced a frightening jumble of rotting, unusable teeth.

But with the help of Dr. Meza and other IMA volunteers, these and other patients received life-changing surgeries and other medical care that they either couldn't afford or that simply wasn't available in Nicaragua.

In fact, during their 10-day medical mission in early August, the 65 IMA volunteers provided medical services to 8,446 people, including 120 life-changing surgeries, 695 dental procedures, 949 pediatric and 1,465 internal medicine consultations involving everything from urinary tract infections to ear aches, stomach aches, joint pains, tropical skin rashes and allergy related ailments.

Thania S. Garcia, a representative from the Nicaraguan Consulate in Los Angeles who helped coordinate the mission, said her country is extremely grateful for the help and goodwill of the American volunteers, many of whom provided specialized medical care that is not available in Nicaragua, which is widely considered to be the second poorest country in the western hemisphere after Haiti. Most medical missions, she added, do not provide dental care or have volunteers who can fit patients with prosthetic limbs.

Dr. Meza, for his part, said he felt fortunate simply to be in a position to participate in a medical humanitarian mission in Nicaragua.

The August mission to Somoto, Nicaragua was organized by Rancho Mirage, Calif.-based International Medical Alliance, a non-profit group that organizes medical missions to Central or South America each year with the help of volunteers and donations of money and medical supplies. The group is planning its next mission in Esteli, Nicaragua next summer and hopes to recruit additional doctors and surgeons who specialize in cardiology, dermatology, urology and general internal medicine.

For more information on International Medical Alliance or to participate in an upcoming medical mission trip, please call (760) 485-8963 or visit its website at [www.internationalmedicalalliance.org](http://www.internationalmedicalalliance.org).