



AAHKS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
HIP AND KNEE SURGEONS



**AAHKS
Celebrates
Operation
Walk**



Walk
OPERATION WALK



Welcome

Operation Walk is an all- volunteer medical humanitarian organization that provides the gift of mobility through life-changing joint replacement surgeries that are provided both globally and in the USA at no cost to the patient.

The organization was founded in 1994 by Dr Lawrence Dorr after a teaching trip to Russia. Dr. Dorr recognized the suffering of impoverished people disabled from joint-related conditions, and committed to helping them. Operation Walk's first mission trip was to Cuba in 1997.

Fulfilling this vision seemed to be a daunting task. But through the work of volunteers Jeri Ward and Mary Ellen Sieben the pieces were assembled to perform successful missions throughout the world. Over the past 23 years, Operation Walk has performed hip and knee replacement surgery for an astonishing 17,000 individuals in 20 countries with very few complications. Operation Walk has matured into an international organization with 20 chapters in the USA, two in Canada, and one in Ireland. The central governing board is now an arm of the American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons, and Operation Walk's growth has been accelerated by this leadership. Planned chapters in London, Greece, and Thailand are being organized. Ten centers have applied for formation of chapters in the USA.

Operation Walk performs hip and knee replacements in foreign countries, and typically requires a team of 45-55 medical professionals and volunteers for a week-long mission. All those who participate in a mission volunteer their time, and the doctors pay their own airfare. Implants, surgical materials, medications and recovery equipment are donated by generous American companies, valued at about \$1 million for each mission. In spite of volunteer work and donated supplies, each patient operated on costs an average \$4,500 because of expenses of cargo, and airfare, hotels, meals and local transportation for 45-55 people.

Operation Walk's mission is the treatment of poor people who otherwise would have no chance to overcome being crippled.

These people live in countries where being disabled means being an outcast. Women are not desirable for marriage, and men are not eligible to work. These patients are burdens on their families and villages and they have chronic pain. Imagine the joy of these patients when a miracle drops from the sky, and they are offered an operation to cure their arthritic joint. Imagine the multiplier effect of the ambassador surgeons from the United States whose care allows the afflicted patient to walk from the hospital.

Operation Walk typically operates on 50 to 100 patients during each mission. The local orthopedic doctor selects candidates from hundreds who need the surgeries and sends x-rays to the team in the U.S. to review and select those eligible. In some hospitals where Operation Walk operates there are waiting lists of 1500-3000 patients. The OpWalk team spends half of the first day of each mission screening and selecting the final patients. During each international surgical mission, Operation Walk also educates in-country orthopedic surgeons, nurses, physical therapists and other healthcare professionals on the most advanced treatments and surgical techniques for diseases of the hip and knee joints. The surgeons learn operative techniques that they can use in any operation. This creates a lasting contribution to patient care in these countries.



Operation Walk has a magical effect on all it touches. It is easy to feel the emotions of the patients, their family, and even their neighbors by the dramatic effect of its operations which the patients could not imagine even in their dreams.

But a surprising and wonderful effect is the emotional satisfaction these missions give the health care professionals providing the unconditional giving. This is the romantic experience we wanted when we went to medical school or nursing or physician assistant school. It is a grateful patient trusting his/her surgeon and care givers enough to lie down on an operating table and be put to sleep while a stranger from a foreign country cuts on them. This trust gives intense pride to the healthcare professionals who are caring for this patient with the autonomy of romantic medicine. For many on these missions their experience has restored faith in their profession.

AAHKS is the national governing board, and this makes Operation Walk available to each of its members. Leadership is provided by AAHKS to those who simply want to attend on a trip or to those who want to form their own chapter. Orthopedic surgeons who want to give back to their profession and society because of their gratitude for their career should volunteer to participate in Operation Walk. This is an opportunity through your organization of AAHKS for the emotional growth that accompanies unconditional giving, and will perhaps result in strengthening your love for being a doctor and surgeon. It completes the triangle of education, political protection, and humanitarianism that your membership in AAHKS should provide you.





Operation Walk Canada was established in London, Ontario in 2006 by Dr. Cec Rorabeck.

The previous year, Dr. Rorabeck had participated in a mission to Panama with Dr. Dorr and the Los Angeles Team. He was so inspired that he returned home and, enlisting the resources of a strong local Orthopaedic community, assembled a team which traveled to La Antigua, Guatemala in 2006 and performed 52 hip and knee replacements. In 2009, Dr. Bob Bourne formed a second Operation Walk also based out of London. This group travels to Cuenca, Ecuador to perform hip replacement surgeries on patients with developmental hip dysplasia. Both teams continue their missions to Guatemala and Ecuador to the present day and have carried out just over 1000 total joint replacements.

One very dramatic story is about Carlos whose leg was very badly injured in a serious tractor accident. A farmer, he was no longer able to work and support his young family. But as the saying goes – a picture is worth a thousand words – and these two photos are no exception. Carlos has done very well. He has returned to our clinic in Guatemala and makes us very proud of what Operation Walk makes possible for all the patients we serve.

“Because of the generous work done by the Operation Walk volunteers my life will change forever. They gave me new hips... and a new life.” –Victor, Guatemala 2017

