In-Kind Donations Make Knee Replacement Possible for Patients in Rural Mexico

The Associated Press

GAINESVILLE, Fla.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Nov 20, 2012--At a time many Americans devote to counting their blessings, a group of underprivileged patients in Veracruz, Mexico are thankful to be regaining the most critical aspects of rural life – their mobility and livelihood.

In a hospital with a limited history of joint replacement surgeries, 12 patients experienced the spirit of giving firsthand through in-kind donations from orthopaedic surgeons and staff representing the Walk Strong Foundation and Gainesville, Fla.-based medical device manufacturer, Exactech. This was the third of 20 planned trips to the Regional Specialty Hospital of Veracruz over a 10-year period.

“Many medical mission trips are doing great work, but oftentimes they are a one-time trip,” said Michael J. Christie, MD, orthopaedic surgeon and co-founder of Walk Strong. “We see many opportunities to elevate the standard of care and provide continuing benefits to community residents and medical care providers; our goal is to make a lasting impact.” Exactech donated its Optetrak® total knee implants and instruments for the medical mission. Built on a design history spanning more than three decades, the Optetrak implant system offers comprehensive solutions to total knee replacement, including special options like constrained components and stems, which help address complex cases.

“The Veracruz Mission is aligned with Exactech’s global commitment to medical education and advancing the quality of care to patients around the world,” said David Petty, president of Exactech. “It’s our core purpose to help people maintain their activity and independence. We are proud to be a part of this mission and to extend our purpose by helping indigent patients in Veracruz.” In each weeklong trip, the surgical team has been able to perform anywhere from nine to 22 knee replacement surgeries, present daily lectures for the hospital staff and residents and conduct patient care training for the families. Project C.U.R.E., a non-profit organization that works with recipient partner organizations to donate medical supplies and equipment to hospitals in more than 120 developing countries, helped deliver all of the necessary supplies and equipment for the trip.

“While millions of patients have access to joint replacement and quality of care, there are many challenges in developing countries,” W. Douglas Jackson, PhD, JD, president and CEO of Project C.U.R.E. “The Veracruz mission is really something special, a true team effort to help provide self-sustained healthcare in an area of Mexico that lacks the quality of care they need in their community.” The patients were incredibly grateful for the opportunity to regain their mobility with their new Optetrak knee. One patient suffered from a severe varus deformity and found it

difficult to take even one step; now he stands a little taller with pride in his new knee. Another patient is thankful to get back to selling her homemade tamales as a Mexican street vendor and performer.

“Every journey begins with a single step. Patients who have joint replacement surgery know this. Step-by-step, year-by-year, we will make a life-changing difference in the lives of thousands of people,” Christie said. “With the help of generous donations from Exactech and other companies, plus the dedicated volunteers, we are able to make our first steps in creating a long-term sustainable healthcare system in Veracruz.” The next trip is scheduled for Spring 2013.

About Exactech, Inc. Based in Gainesville, Fla., Exactech develops and markets orthopaedic implant devices, related surgical instruments and biologic materials and services to hospitals and physicians. The company manufactures many of its orthopaedic devices at its Gainesville facility. Exactech’s orthopaedic products are used in the restoration of bones and joints that have deteriorated as a result of injury or diseases such as arthritis. Exactech markets its products in the United States, in addition to more than 30 markets in Europe, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific. Additional information about Exactech, Inc. can be found at http://www.exac.com.

Photos and video of the mission trip are available upon request.

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