

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jeff Crider
IMAHelps
(760) 567-9775
jcrider@imahelps.org

Dr. Cristobal Barrios, Jr.
UC Irvine Medical School
(714) 904-7103
cbarrios@uci.edu

UC IRVINE TEAM OF DOCTORS, SURGEONS AND MEDICAL STUDENTS TO JOIN IMAHELPS MISSION TO ECUADOR

IMAHelps volunteers expects to treat more than 2,000 impoverished patients on their July 28-Aug. 6 humanitarian mission. The UCI students will conduct research to identify ways that IMAHelps volunteers can improve their provision of medical, dental and surgical care to the poor.

Juan Pablo Hoyos suffered severe burns as a toddler in his native Colombia when a pot of boiling water spilled onto him. He survived the ordeal, but grew up hearing stories from his family about he spent two months in a poorly equipped Colombian hospital that didn't have the proper supplies to adequately treat his wounds.

Now a third-year medical student at UC Irvine, Hoyos hopes to someday establish a nonprofit organization of his own to bring

healthcare and hope not only to his native Colombia, but to places around the world where people suffer from inadequate access to healthcare services.

In two weeks, Hoyos will take a big step in learning how nonprofit global healthcare organizations work when he joins more than a dozen UC Irvine doctors, surgeons and medical students on a 10-day medical mission to Quito, Ecuador, where they expect to treat more than 2,000 impoverished patients.

“I am extremely excited about joining the IMAHelps team. Everyone seems genuinely passionate about this mission, which is something that resonated with me,” said Hoyos, who is enrolled in UCI’s Program in Medical Education for the Latino Community. Hoyos will be joined by two other third-year UCI medical students, including Caitlyn Sing, who grew up in a Mexican-Korean immigrant family in East Los Angeles, and Naomie Devico, who grew up in Morocco, Argentina and the U.S. and has volunteered with medical nonprofits in Israel and Mexico.

The July 28-Aug. 6 IMAHelps medical mission to Ecuador will be led by Dr. Cristobal Barrios, Jr., a UC Irvine surgeon, professor and assistant dean of the U.C. Irvine School of Medicine. Dr. Barrios was appointed president and CEO of IMAHelps after serving on the nonprofit organization’s board of directors and volunteering his surgical talents on IMAHelps medical missions for the past 12 years.

The upcoming medical mission will take place at Hospital General Docente de Calderón, which serves some of the most underserved communities in Quito, Ecuador. More than 80 healthcare professionals from Southern California and across the country plan to join the IMAHelps mission, using their vacation time and paying their own travel costs to serve the poor.

Medical Mission Research by UCI Students

Hoyos, for his part, will be one of three UCI medical students who will conduct research on the mission with the ultimate goal of identifying ways that IMAHelps can improve its provision of medical, dental and surgical care to the poor.

“The UCI students will develop and conduct a survey designed to provide information on the demographics of our medical mission patients, their expectations and reasons for seeking medical mission care as well as their satisfaction with the treatment and services provided by medical mission volunteers,” Dr. Barrios said. “The information collected through the survey will help us tailor care for future missions. Internal surveys of medical mission team members will also be conducted to gauge their sense of meaningfulness and effectiveness so that we can identify ways to improve improve our methods of care delivery.”

The IMAHelps board appointed Hoyos to oversee the survey research conducted in Ecuador and to serve as a liaison with the IMAHelps board of directors. Dr. Barrios said IMAHelps plans to publish key findings from its upcoming medical mission research in medical journals in the U.S. and overseas in an effort to share its findings and help nonprofit global health organizations improve their provision of healthcare to the poor.

Hoyos said the experience with IMAHelps will help shape his future efforts to help the poor around the world. “This mission to Quito will allow me to learn more about how NGOs operate and, most importantly, the barriers and limitations they have. By understanding these limitations early on in my career, I can better prepare to overcome them in the future and ultimately provide the best care possible for our people around the world.”

About IMAHelps

Rancho Mirage, California-based IMAHelps is a nonprofit global health organization that assembles some of the largest private medical, dental and surgical humanitarian missions in the Western Hemisphere with teams comprised of as many as 130 volunteers. Over the past 23 years, IMAHelps has provided free medical, dental and surgical care to over 100,000 impoverished patients, including more than 2,500 life-changing and life-saving surgeries, from cleft lip and club foot repairs to pacemaker implants and other life-saving surgical interventions. The IMAHelps prosthetics team has fitted more than 400 patients in six countries with artificial limbs, enabling them to get up out of their wheelchairs and walk again. Meanwhile, IMAHelps dentists have provided tens of thousands of patients with everything from teeth cleanings to root canals and extractions. For more information and to support our efforts, please visit www.imahelps.org.