

NEWS PEACE

The Assessment of Need

By Bibiana Gama, Programs Director

Jose*, a quiet toddler who was holding his mom's hand, was hard to miss in the busy outpatient area of the burn care unit at Instituto Nacional de Salud del Niño San Borja in Lima, Peru. His face was buried under a compressive garment mask that only had small openings for his eyes, nostrils and mouth. 5 months ago, Jose had suffered severe burn injuries on his face, thorax, arms and legs when he fell into a big pot of boiling water that was on the floor, and now his body is showing the effects of aggressive contractures that are impeding him to do even the simplest everyday tasks.

While visiting this burn unit for the first time, I, along with our tireless volunteer occupational therapist Michael Serghiou, saw many cases like Jose's. As Michael gave lectures to all the burn staff unit on positioning and early mobilization and led hands-on training sessions to therapists on fabrication of inserts for face and splints for mouth, nose, ear and neck (some of whom have never had this training or used this material before), I spent time with the medical staff to complete a needs assessment that offers not only many opportunities to forge a relationship with the staff but also help us to identify resources, strengths, and barriers that the local team has in providing a multidisciplinary care to burn patients.

Physicians for Peace (PFP) works to develop the infrastructure of resource-developing countries by training health professionals. What differentiates PFP training from that of other organizations is an emphasis on critical thinking skills. PFP trains not simply in what to do and how to do it, but why and when to do it. As Michael observed, "these cases were so difficult ... They (therapists) need education and support, and for us to validate that what they do is correct so as to improve their self-esteem when it comes to applying rehabilitation to their patients. This was a confidence building experience for them so that they believe in themselves and their ability to treat their patients."

While what we witnessed and experienced is a lack of material needs, the desire and passion to care for their burn patients at Instituto Nacional de Salud del Niño San Borja is just as strong as any other viable burn unit. Ultimately, so much of healthcare is not about the equipment or supplies, the infrastructure or



GRACIAS, FROM LIMA PERU!

Just finishing up a trip to Lima, Peru, with medical volunteer Michael Serghiou who led a facial splint training for therapists at Instituto Nacional de Salud del Niño San Borja while Bibi Gama, program director, met with the medical staff for program assessment. Gracias to Performance Health for their generous donation of splinting material!

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environment. It's about the healthcare worker, that person who applies his or her knowledge to treat the patient using whatever tools are available. That's where training can be the difference between life and death.

We go out to fact find, assess and offer feedback. We coordinate with our local partners to ensure that programs and resources align with their needs, ensuring that the training capitalizes on their existing resources and emphasizes patient-centered care. With your support and a safety net of well-trained and knowledgeable health professionals and individuals, communities can move from surviving to thriving.



All the best,
Bibi



Occupational therapist and PFP volunteer Michael Serghiou explains the importance of proper splinting techniques



Material used during training to make facial and thoracic splints



Enthusiastic physical therapists with their completed splints