



For immediate release

For additional information
Contact: Larry Lichtenauer
(410) 363-6205

BALTIMORE-AREA ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON LEADS CONTINGENT TO DOMINICAN REPUBLIC TO HELP NEEDY

*Group from Greater Chesapeake Hand Specialists and other local hospitals
have been offering free medical care to residents of La Romana since 1994*

Baltimore, MD (November 20, 2009) – While watching football games on television, raking leaves and enjoying extravagant turkey dinners with family members is tradition for most Baltimoreans, the Thanksgiving holiday has meant something far different and more personally satisfying for the past seven years to Dr. Michael S. Murphy, an orthopedic surgeon with Greater Chesapeake Hand Specialists (CGHS).

Over the last several weeks, Dr. Murphy and his team of nurses and other specialists have been busy preparing for a week's stay in the city of La Romana in the Dominican Republic, where they will examine and offer treatment for approximately 150 needy residents, free of charge. He will have little time to think about his friends, colleagues and family members eating hearty meals and relaxing during the holiday week, from his position more than 1200 miles away.

“This trip exemplifies why we decided to become doctors in the first place,” said Dr. Murphy. He explained that Dr. Shaw Wilgis, formerly involved with Greater Chesapeake Hand Specialists, initiated the mission more than 15 years ago. **The Dorothy Scott Fund at the Union Memorial Hospital, established for educational travel, provides funding for this trip.** Dr. Murphy assumed leadership of the contingent in 2002 and recruits different nurses from his group, as well as fellows working in the Baltimore-Washington, D.C. region, to accompany him each year. “It becomes a quite competitive process among the fellows, as they have the opportunity to work on conditions and problems that are far different from what they experience in the United States,” Dr. Murphy said.

The physician's group first day in the Dominican Republic requires them to examine upwards of 150 different patients in a process where the medical professionals will decide which people will receive follow-up treatment, thereby determining the schedule for the balance of the week. For the past six months, **physicians led by Dr.**

Isabelle Léon at the country's Central Medical Corporation -- which helps fund the mission -- has been evaluating patients to determine who will be lucky enough to gain an audience with the Baltimore doctors. Some residents will wait five hours or more for a 15-minute examination.

“Our group will see a lot of kids, many who have suffered severe burns from working with primitive cooking equipment,” Dr. Murphy explained. “There are also congenital problems that have occurred due to the island population, injuries received when an individual was attacked with a machete and other wounds manifested from a civilization using techniques and machinery that we would equate from the 1950s in our country.”

The balance of the week is devoted to performing various surgeries, followed by having clinical follow-ups with the patients to monitor the progress of the patients. “I have worked on certain residents up to eight times and offer different medical assistance each year. We have become familiar with each other over time as we work to help them with an assortment of various problems,” Dr. Murphy said.

Much like the range of medical conditions they see, there are a plethora of reasons why Dr. Murphy and his team make the trip to the Dominican Republic on an annual basis. “The mission always provides me with a great opportunity to use my physician skills and I am challenged in different ways from what I see in my day-to-day practice. The fellows receive real-world experience that is not comparable to situations and conditions in the United States. It definitely helps advance their medical careers in a unique way.”

The ironic timing of Thanksgiving also provides each member of the group with a life-altering perspective, especially for those that visit La Romana for the first time.

“It is trite to say, but we take the luxuries of life in the United States for granted on a daily basis. We see first-hand the struggles that these residents face, without the benefit of modern technology and medical conditions. When I return back home, I sometimes have to laugh at the perceived problems that some people make a big deal over. Maybe, on some level, I need a dose of reality myself every so often,” he added.

In addition, Dr. Murphy visits the country each April for follow-up medical examinations of the patients.

Founded in 1987 and based in Lutherville, MD, Greater Chesapeake Hand Specialists, P.A. focuses on providing successful outcomes for the entire spectrum of problems associated with the hand, wrist, elbow and shoulder. The practice group, which consists of nine full-time physicians, maintains seven satellite locations throughout Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Howard and Talbot counties, as well as Baltimore City. For more information visit www.chesapeakehand.com

