Central America Lifebox Initiative

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Committee on Global Humanitarian Outreach

The Lifebox Initiative continues to be well supported by the ASA membership and leadership. Nearly $200,000 has been raised to date, and the donations continue online, at the annual meeting and at other specialty and state society meetings around the country. But the donation of the pulse oximeter is only the first step in improving patient safety in low-income countries. Education, training and monitoring outcomes are essential to this process.

At Lifebox’s request, the ASA Committee on Global Humanitarian Outreach will launch its commitment to Central America. This commitment includes providing donations to meet the pulse oximeter gap in Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama, and thereafter providing the in-country education and training and delivery of units to responsible providers and hospitals. In 2013, this effort will begin in Nicaragua with the delivery of more than 87 pulse oximeters by a team of five volunteers who will provide the necessary education. Thereafter, a team will return in follow up to this initial educational effort.

At the 2012 annual meeting, the inaugural Lifebox “train the trainers” session met and drew more than 50 interested participants and future volunteers. During the session, the University of Florida provided background on the process of supplying oximeters and training to every operating room completed earlier that year in Honduras. This shining success, also occurring in a Central American country, supports the further participation of this process by ASA.

Later this year, the ASA GHO Committee will be recruiting volunteers to spend approximately five days in Nicaragua delivering oximeters and providing education and training for the use of the technology, response to low \(\text{SpO}_2\), and the maintenance of a patient log. This first visit will be followed with annual visits to monitor the continuous use of pulse oximetry and evaluate outcomes after the introduction of the pulse oximeters. Thereafter, similar programs will be launched in Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Panama. If you are interested in participating as a volunteer, please contact us through the ASA GHO website at www.asahq.org/gho.

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Photo courtesy of Gwendolyn Boyd, M.D.