



All Things Ignatian



The Spirit of Collaboration: The Physical Therapy Program Works with the Dominican People in *el Campo*

Julie Hoffman, PT, DPT, CCS, Director, PT ILAC

The department of Physical Therapy (PT) at Creighton University has been working *for and with others* in the Dominican Republic since the beginning of its program in 1996. One ongoing component of the PT ILAC program is working with rural communities (el campo) to promote health and provide physical therapy services. The physical therapy students and professionals provide education to the regional community leaders and provide physical therapy treatment to those in need.



Physical Therapy students teach a community leader, cooperadora, exercises to increase flexibility and strength in the back with the goal of reducing injury and pain and increasing function. The cooperadoras in turn share this information with members of their individual communities.

Program Growth

The PT ILAC program has grown over the years with increased numbers of students participating and a large number of ILAC alumni returning to serve as clinical instructors. This has allowed the program to collaborate with more people and provide more service to the communities.

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
# of students	15	17	19	24	22	27
Campo visited	Sabana Rey Latina	La Jibera	Las Lagunas	La Guama	Vaca Gorda	La Vereda
# of PT treatments in el campo	45	50	62	76	81	55
# of cooperadores attending in-service	22	20	14	20	20	16

Distribution of Donated Equipment

The program also gathers donated equipment such as walkers, wheelchairs, crutches, braces and exercise equipment to be distributed to and utilized by the Dominican people. These donated items improve the quality of life by promoting mobility and minimizing pain with functional activity. Once the donated item is no longer needed by an individual, it becomes the property of the community or is returned to the ILAC center to be recirculated.



Personal and Professional Growth

Students are asked to reflect on how they have grown personally and professionally as a result of this program. Here is a quotation from one student:

‘It’s difficult to answer this question because so much has changed both personally and professionally as a result of this experience. I will focus on two things: 1) Professionally I have come to a much greater appreciation for what physical therapy does for a person’s quality of life. The patients we saw did not always have the type of care they would have received in the US, and it was a clear illustration of the value of regular, personalized PT care. 2) Personally I was touched by two concepts illustrated by the people of the DR. The first is that generosity is possible even when you have nothing material to give. The second is that simplicity just may be the key to happiness. ‘

Sponsored by the Creighton University Jesuit Community, in association with the Deglman Center for Ignatian Spirituality.