



*Oregon's largest multi-specialty, physician-owned medical clinic.*

Media contacts:

Bela Friedman / 503-848-3640

Elizabeth Lindenmuth / 503-963-2893

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Physicians from The Oregon Clinic Reach Beyond U.S. Borders to Help Others in Need**

**Portland, Ore., Jan. 11, 2011** -- At The Oregon Clinic "*Specialty Medicine with Commitment, Care & Compassion*" isn't just a tagline next to the organization's logo. It's a core belief that guides nearly everything this team of 120+ physicians undertakes.

This core belief is perhaps most evident in the spirit of volunteerism that is exemplified by many of The Oregon Clinic's physicians. Diverse and ongoing volunteer experiences, around the world, are teaching these physicians how much can be done with so little and are helping them become even better specialists.

The physicians at The Oregon Clinic have a long history of volunteerism. From Haiti and Honduras to Kenya and Mongolia, these generous doctors organize and lead teaching clinics and provide desperately needed medical services to thousands of impoverished people with chronic and advanced diseases.

According to Paul Hansen, M.D., FACS, a physician with the Gastrointestinal & Minimally Invasive Surgery Division at The Oregon Clinic, volunteer physicians also act as ambassadors who build relationships with medical professionals in other countries by sharing surgical techniques and practices with them.

During a two-week trip to Vietnam and Cambodia in November 2009, Dr. Hansen gave presentations on U.S. approaches to minimally invasive liver surgery. In Cambodia, Dr. Hansen saw the results of the communist Pol Pot regime first hand. "During this time in their history, most all Cambodians who had any western knowledge or could speak foreign languages were killed as part of a cleansing by the Khmer Rouge -- a total of several million people mostly over the age of 25. Today, there are few people over the age of 60. It's amazing how much they can do with such limited resources," he said.

John Handy, M.D., HonD, who is an oncology and thoracic surgeon at The Oregon Clinic, echoes this observation and is encouraged by the quick progress he's noted in some of the countries he's visited as a volunteer surgeon. In Mongolia, where Dr. Handy

has volunteered for nearly 10 years, he runs thoracic surgery and trauma clinics and works at many hospitals including the National Center for Communicable Disease. "The magnitude of progress in Mongolia over the past few years is tremendous," Dr. Handy remarked. "At first we weren't sure they were committed to carrying out what we were teaching and advising, but today their intent is very clear."

In addition to teaching and setting up clinics, the physicians at The Oregon Clinic also perform routine and emergency medical duties and surgeries at the countries they visit. "We work long hours with limited resources, yet are often amazed at how much we can accomplish," said Shaghayegh Aliabadi-Wahle, M.D., a surgeon in the Gastrointestinal & Minimally Invasive Surgery Division at The Oregon Clinic.

In fact, Dr. Aliabadi participated in nearly 70 surgeries the week she volunteered at a clinic in Honduras when she was a 4<sup>th</sup> year medical student. It was this positive experience that prompted her to begin a career in surgery. More recently, accompanied by her family she performed a broad spectrum of surgical procedures in Guatemala. Because of her interest in endocrine surgery, in 2011 she will travel to the Philippines, a country with a high incidence of thyroid disease.

Jim Patterson, M.D., of The Oregon Clinic's Pulmonary, Critical Care & Sleep Medicine Division who has made five trips to Haiti, last visited during the recent cholera epidemic. "We work as a close knit team of six or seven doctors and a roughly equal number of nurses and other support staff basically seeing patients of all ages all day long and often into the night. It is a rewarding, interesting and exhausting experience. Luckily, we did not lose any of our cholera patients."

Though a lot can be accomplished in just a week or 10 days, some physicians volunteer for longer periods of time. Michael G. Phillips, M.D., who is part of The Oregon Clinic's Gastroenterology Division volunteered in Kenya for two months. While there, he worked at the Moi University in Eldoret as well seeing tribesmen in the Masai Mara National Reserve where they treated an average of 30 patients per day. Dr. Phillips continues to volunteer on a regular basis and has plans to work in Guatemala next year.

"Cultural experiences and personal growth through new learning are partial reasons why I volunteer," Dr. Phillips said. "Additionally, these experiences allow me to help people in much more tangible ways than is possible in the U.S."

A pulmonary critical care physician with The Oregon Clinic, Dr. Lou Libby has volunteered in Kenya three times. He and Dr. Patterson focused on critical care patients and patients with pulmonary complications through a fellowship spearheaded by Brown University. "There's never been a pulmonary critical care physician on this continent outside of South Africa," Dr. Libby noted. "Dr. Patterson and I went there as part of a larger effort to specifically teach pulmonary and critical care skills."

One of Dr. Libby's most memorable experiences involved a family end-of-life counseling program that he helped introduce while he was in Kenya. "The idea of having an open family conversation about patients who are terminally ill was a new and totally foreign idea to them. Initially, the staff were very reluctant to initiate these conversations. But we continued to focus on the benefits of comfort measures and to coach them on the process, and eventually, after trying it themselves, they agreed to continue this approach with certain patients."

Rodger Sleven, M.D. cites a similar accomplishment. A gastroenterologist at The Oregon Clinic, Dr. Sleven has made three separate visits to Honduras and will return in 2011. He initially went there to help set up an endoscopy program and lab. One of his most vivid memories is being a patient himself for teaching purposes along with Mike Owens, M.D., another gastroenterologist from The Oregon Clinic.

“We taught the program’s director by having her perform the procedure on each of us before we began teaching her on the patients. It was the only way we could teach the procedure. Unfortunately, we had no sedatives.”

Despite this very concrete outcome, Dr. Sleven’s summary of the volunteer experience is much less tangible. In fact, it harkens back to The Oregon Clinic’s core beliefs in *commitment, care & compassion*.

He put it this way: “I got much more from the process and the experience than the folks in Honduras received. Moreover, I had the privilege of watching first hand how people in countries we call "less fortunate" still have the energy to enjoy, to love, and to feel all the same things we do about each other. I also learned first hand about our abundance and our complacency regarding this abundance. As a result, I am more anxious to "give back" and take on a more personal obligation to help repair the world.”

**About The Oregon Clinic:**

The Oregon Clinic is the largest private specialty physician practice in Oregon, with more than 120 physicians practicing over 30 different medical and surgical specialties and sub-specialties. We use a team approach to address health conditions at more than 15 locations from Vancouver to Salem, and from Hood River to Astoria. Founded in Portland in 1994, our physicians and staff are committed to delivering the highest quality patient care, practicing evidence-based medicine, and providing leadership for the healthcare community. Visit [www.orclinic.com](http://www.orclinic.com) or call 503-935-8000 for more information.