

International Volunteering

Phelps Laryngologist Craig Zalvan, MD, Joins Volunteer Teaching Mission in Peru

This year, laryngologist Craig Zalvan, MD, Medical Director of the Phelps Institute for Voice and Swallowing Disorders, had the honor of being invited to join a volunteer medical teaching mission in Lima, Peru, organized by Global ENT Outreach. The focus of the mission was to teach diagnostic and therapeutic techniques and skills pertaining to the larynx (voicebox) and pharynx (throat). Rather than performing operations, which is the purpose of many missions, in this case, Dr. Zalvan provided instruction to Peruvian ENTs (ear, nose and throat physicians) on how to better diagnose and treat their patients.

Techniques that have been commonplace in the U.S. for decades are very uncommon in some parts of Peru. These techniques include *fiberoptic laryngoscopy*, where a flexible scope is placed through the nose to examine the throat, and *stroboscopy*, where a tool with a flashing light is used to view the vocal cords in slow motion. Stroboscopy is the "gold standard" diagnostic test for voice problems. Many of the physicians Dr. Zalvan met had never performed a diagnostic laryngoscopy and most Peruvian ENTs do not perform stroboscopy. This was a chance to quickly bridge the gap.

"The true gratitude and excitement that was expressed by the Peruvian ENTs has only moved me to want to help more," says Dr. Zalvan. In fact, he plans to return to Peru for the next conference. During his next visit, he will demonstrate how to rehabilitate a paralyzed vocal fold, both in a physician's office and the operating room. He will also demonstrate *microflap* surgery, in which the skin of the vocal cord is lifted to remove the portion that is causing hoarseness. This delicate approach is often needed for patients with polyps and vocal cysts, especially singers.

"By teaching the doctors in Peru these advanced techniques, they will be able to perform many more procedures, discover more pathology, and deliver better medicine to their patients," says Dr. Zalvan.



Craig Zalvan, MD, (in green shirt) is pictured with the Peruvian ENTs he had the privilege to teach.