



Strengthening the Safety Net of Specialty Care

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Medical Volunteers Team Up to Provide Surgery to Uninsured Patients

IRVINE, CA (April 5, 2008) – Sixteen uninsured patients will receive donated outpatient surgeries this Saturday and one uninsured patients has already received a minor procedure through a partnership between Kaiser Permanente and Access OC. Access OC is a nonprofit network of medical volunteers, hospitals and community clinics providing surgeries to the uninsured.

The surgeries are all medically necessary procedures that will dramatically impact the patient's ability to work or care for their family. Among the procedures to be performed are hernia, ligament, and carpal tunnel repairs. In many cases, these patients have been unable to work due to their medical conditions. Providing the surgery will put them back to work and allow them to provide for their families.

Kaiser Permanente's outpatient surgical center in Irvine was the first to collaborate with Access OC last May. This will be Kaiser Permanente's second Surgery Saturday with Access OC. 45 Kaiser Permanente volunteers – including surgeons, anesthesiologists, nurses, operating technicians, schedulers, admitting personnel and other staff – will donate their time Saturday morning. The volunteers are the base of Access OC's success as they selflessly give of their time to improve the health of people in their community. For most of the Kaiser volunteers this will be their second time volunteering with Access OC.

“Community clinics provide excellent primary care for patients every day, but when confronted with more complicated ailments, clinic providers have nowhere to send their patients for specialty care,” said Access OC Executive Director Linda Haghi. “These patients being treated today have been in pain and waiting for treatment for months and in some cases several years. Without the surgeries performed today by these medical volunteers, they would wait additional months or years before receiving care. So often while patients are waiting for needed care, many of them end up in emergency rooms with a much more severe illness. Thanks to our volunteers, we are able to help these people get back to work and out of pain.”

“I went into medicine to help people heal,” said Dr. Ramin Zolfagari, a Kaiser Permanente Medical Group affiliated physician volunteering for the program. “Specialists typically have had to travel to South America or Asia to contribute their skills in a coordinated way. Now Access OC allows me to help right here close to home.”

Quote by Dr. Ramin Zolfagari

Access OC is program of the Health Funders Partnership of Orange County, a group of health funders working together to strengthen the safety net of healthcare services in Orange County. Access OC’s mission is to improve access to specialty care for the low-income residents of Orange County. Four hospitals have joined the volunteer network – Kaiser Permanente, St. Jude Medical Center, Hoag Memorial Hospital and St. Joseph Hospital of Orange. Access OC is developing several other specialty care programs, building on the success of the surgery program. The Volunteer Center of Orange County is the fiscal sponsor for the Health Funders Partnership of Orange County.

For more information about Access OC’s programs, please contact Linda Haghi, Executive Director, at 949.553.1320 and visit the website at www.AccessOC.org .

Patients Available for Interviews

Raquel Perez is very grounded in her faith and believes that everyone is connected and can help each other. For three years Raquel has been suffering with an umbilical hernia. Recently the pain from her hernia was so excruciating that she felt like vomiting at times and was forced to take lots of pain killers. That is when Raquel made a promise to God that if Access OC helped her obtain her surgery she would sponsor 10 orphans in Mexico and send them clothes and toys. Raquel is the mother of 4 children, she says “I feel very fortunate for being able to have Access OC help me with my hernia surgery. The same way I am being helped, I want to help others in need.” Raquel is very grateful and she considers everyone helping from Share Ourselves Community Clinic, to Access OC, and everyone at Kaiser as angels sent from God.

Francisca Gaytan has been picking strawberries for the past 15 years in Sand Canyon. Just last year the OC fires reached Sand Canyon and Francisca and her husband who is also a farm worker were out of work for two weeks. They were forced to go to local churches to obtain food and clothing. Francisca has needed an umbilical hernia surgery for 3 years and she has daily pain that truly affects her as a farm worker. Nurse Practitioner, Janet Hildebrand from Puente a la Salud Mobile Clinic informed her that she needed surgery but Francisca knew she couldn’t afford it. Francisca does not have insurance or a means to pay for surgery; she has been forced to work through the pain. She is thrilled to be able to have her surgery through Access OC at Kaiser Permanente’s Super Surgery Day on April 5. Francisca and her husband support their 5 children and could have never imagined being able to afford such a surgery. Francisca expresses, “I am making my story known so that more people know about this program and can have access to this help.”