

Carlos Lopez, MD



I love it," says Eisenhower Medical Center Internist Carlos Lopez, MD of his work with International Medical Alliance, a Rancho Mirage-based group that travels to Ecuador to treat indigent patients.

Dr. Lopez, his wife Luisa, a dentist, and his older daughter Alex traveled with a group of 48 other doctors, dentists, nurses and volunteers to the town of Ibarra, Ecuador in July 2009. "I saw about 100 to 110 patients each day over the course of eight days. We performed evaluations for diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, infections, lung problems, medicines, etc. If patients needed lab work, we would ask them to go get lab work done and have them come back the next day. Many patients scheduled for surgery with our group needed pre-op workups and post-op care."

Dr. Lopez remembers seeing patients who came for the first time and who were found to be in the beginning stages of heart failure. "We did EKGs [electrocardiograms], blood work, got them started on medications, and tried to see them a few times before we left. Then, we set them up on a regimen to be continued by the local doctors at the hospital." The group also brought their own supplies and pharmaceuticals, and dispensed more than 1,000 medications a day.

Dr. Lopez explained that the group goes to places where people have no access to health care, no money or time, or the hospitals are not able to provide enough slots for them to come see a doctor. "Even though they have doctors, they only have so many slots for so many patients. In Ibarra, sometimes the patients have to sleep in front of the hospital or in the reception area through the night in order to get an appointment," says Dr. Lopez.

Lopez and his wife plan on future trips to other countries in need. "We bring our kids along on these trips," shares Lopez. "They work as translators or in the outpatient areas, pharmacy or transporting patients. It is a great experience for them to see how the people in other countries live and how difficult it is."