

## August in Quito

Contributed by Vito C. Quatela, M.D.

Our visit to Quito, Ecuador this past August was our most successful medical mission so far. Our team screened 120 patients and performed 82 surgical procedures on 70 patients during the week. Eighty percent of our patients were under 18 years old and all were of Native American and Hispanic descent. The procedures included 32 first-stage microtia cases, 16 second-stage, 12 third-stage, 19 fourth-stage and 3 miscellaneous. Based on current CPT codes, \$550,000 in surgical fees was donated.

These impressive numbers speak for themselves. Our wish list last year included a cooling/air conditioning system and we were able to install one in the operating room, where temperatures were often above 90 degrees. This system greatly improved our surgical experience. Medical staff and patients were more comfortable and we had no infections this year, due to better air quality.

A research project directed by Mack Cheney, MD, examined data gathered from our patients to determine if a correlation exists between regional oil spills and the high prevalence of microtia in Quito. Dr. Cheney is head facial plastic surgeon at Harvard Medical Center. Research is ongoing and we do not have measured conclusions at this point. We will continue to participate in this project on future visits. We had altogether a successful mission in Quito in 2007 and look forward to improving the experience in 2008.