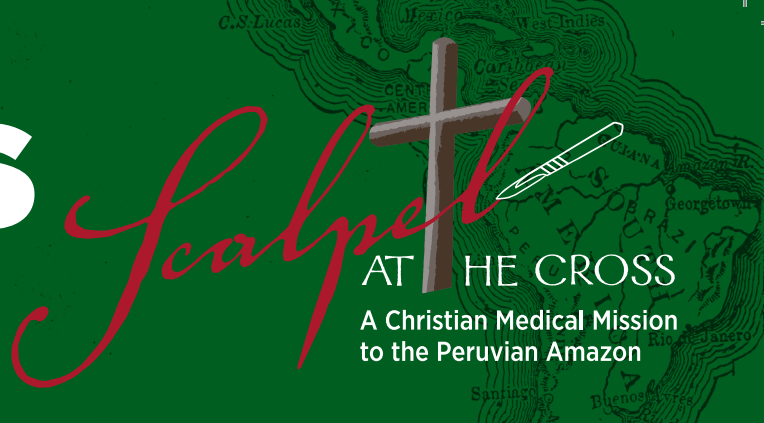


SCALPEL'S EDGE



AT THE CROSS

A Christian Medical Mission
to the Peruvian Amazon

A GIFT OF LIGHT, HOPE AND SURGERY TO PERU

SUMMER 2021 | ISSUE 34

DISTINCTIVENESS AND DIFFERENTIATION **Mission with Impact**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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- A Conversation with Elsa & Cody
- A Miracle Unfolds
- Prayer & Praise
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“ Our Christian faith is at the center of the work, providing purpose and calling, inspiring and motivating our leadership, directing our giving, and informing our methods. ”

By Peter A. Cole, M.D. - President, Scalpel At The Cross



I would like to make the case for what makes Scalpel At The Cross a unique ministry amongst many humanitarian, medical non-profit organizations, Christian or otherwise. Certainly, there are many NGOs (non-government organizations) doing wonderful work throughout the world, and I am grateful to know dozens of colleagues laboring to relieve suffering and extinguish disease in many countries.

Scalpel At The Cross differs in the way we combine a faith-centric approach to care and an

academic approach to surgery in the developing world. Combine these attributes with the most technologically intense subspecialty in the field of medicine, orthopaedic surgery, and transfer all of these to the Amazon Jungle. There is none other like Scalpel At The Cross.

What does it mean to practice medicine with a faith-centric approach to care? Our Christian faith is at the center of the work, providing purpose and calling, inspiring and motivating our leadership, directing our giving, and informing our methods.

You have heard me say at the end of the day, we are more about healing hearts than fixing bones. There is modest value in straightening a leg so someone may return to work for a few more years, if they are headed to an eternity separated from the Creator-God. The author Francis Chan likens one's life to an inch of twine on a mile-long rope (<https://youtu.be/86dsfBbZfWs>), and yet even this illustration pales next to reality. I want to be clear that when I describe Scalpel as faith-centric, it does not mean we force faith on anyone, nor apply a litmus test to the team members we take to the Amazon, nor preach at anyone. It does, however, mean that collectively

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DISTINCTIVENESS AND DIFFERENTIATION



we seek to fulfill what has been called The Greatest Commandment to Love, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and the second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself." This commandment exhorted by Jesus Christ, to doubting teachers of the law in Israel, is so central to the Christian life that it was written clearly in three of the Bible Gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, Luke), as well as in both old and new testaments of the Bible.

I have had many Christian trip members say to me during a trip, "Being on a Scalpel team feels completely different than other mission trips I have been on," typically referring to aspects such as praying for the patients on whom we operate, discussing our heart reflections during evenings in a biblical context, sharing song and praise with the team before retiring each night to open-air beds under the smashing galaxy and squawking creatures of the night-time rainforest. Likewise, I have had many non-faith travelers thank me for

inviting them to a medical mission trip filled with "something completely different but special," often not knowing how to put their experience into words; some have become Christians. It is the gospel of Jesus that sets us apart.

What do I mean by an academic approach to the surgical care of patients, and why does this attribute make us unique? When someone refers to the term "academics" in the context of medicine, they are speaking of an approach which incorporates education and research into the delivery of care. In academics there is a decided emphasis through resources, tools, and talent, on teaching and discovery through one's work.

The educational component of our mission is reflected in many ways. We name and claim education in our Vision, "integrate educational exchange to catalyze knowledge and understanding of orthopaedics and rehabilitation." (<https://scalpelatthecross.org/our-ministry/>) It is of primary importance that when we leave the jungle, the work goes on. By working side-by-side with Peruvian



healthcare workers in a one-on-one apprentice model, giving lectures on orthopaedic topics before morning rounds, and providing study

materials to probe thought-process and unlock doors to new contexts for treatment, we are always fulfilling the academic mission. Scalpel has hosted virtual seminars during the pandemic and will continue to do so when the world is back open. Scalpel has sponsored externships for Peruvian surgeons to travel to America to learn in our institutions, so they may return home emboldened with new techniques of care. The mission has a partnership with the University of Minnesota Department of Orthopaedics to sponsor mission trips to the Amazon for selected residents in training. I have taken orthopaedic fellows and medical students from America to the Amazon for cross-pollination of trainees' minds with other cultures. Indeed, the Scalpel passion and execution for education is a differentiator amongst many humanitarian causes. The same is true for the research component of academic medicine. Research is a high



and difficult calling, and certainly a major distinctive amongst the many non-profit organizations deploying doctors throughout the world. Our mission tracks what it does, studies questions about surgical care, and reports findings in forums where others may read about the work and learn from our clinical mistakes and victories. (<https://scalpelatthecross.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/IBJS-Article-By-Bradley-Lezak.pdf>) We have spent over three hundred thousand dollars building a patient follow-up program so we know our results of

“ At this critical time in our history, we are launching a capital campaign to raise money for **The Miracle Campus for Orthotics and Prosthetics & Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (OP&OR)**. ”

surgery. (<https://scalpelatthecross.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Torchia-et-al.-2016-A-Patient-Follow-up-Program-for-Short-Term-Surgica.pdf>) The execution of this work is through our employees who are tracking results and reporting cures and complications alike back to the leaders and surgeons on the trip. The Scalpel Board of Directors has authorized the build-out of an entire electronic health record system called **CrossCare-2**, so we may better serve teams, track patient information and study mission results. This Electronic Health Record-EHR decision has already differentiated Scalpel At The Cross from other missions, and we believe this model will one day serve as a template for others' record of work in austere medical environments.

At this critical time in our history, we are launching a capital campaign to raise money for **The Miracle Campus for Orthotics and Prosthetics & Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (OP&OR)**. You will learn much more about this exciting new adventure inside this issue of Scalpel's Edge. If you are impressed with what makes Scalpel At The Cross distinctive and the way faith-centrality and academics differentiates us from the other good causes pulling at you, please consider how you may help support Scalpel At The Cross. If the Spirit is speaking to you, if God is tugging on your heart, if you are inspired by spreading the goodness I have shared with you, please help at this critical time in our history. (<http://giving.ncsservices.org/scalpelatthecross>) Blessings! †

A CONVERSATION WITH ELSA & CODY

Esteban Cardona, Director of Development, Communications & Patient Care

Medicine has seen a surge of students with radically different goals than their peers, a growing demand to increase orthopaedic clinics and practice in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC). Focusing on surgical care in the Peruvian Amazon, Scalpel At The Cross is uniquely positioned to help medical students achieve altruistic and humanitarian goals. We sat down with Elsa Bademan, an undergraduate student at Wheaton College, and Dr. William (Cody) Sessions III, a fifth-year orthopaedic resident, who desire to serve Christ through their callings.

Can you give us some background on what motivates you to pursue medical ministry?

Dr. Sessions: My journey into medicine is backwards compared to many peers who always wanted to be doctors. In college, I wanted to make a spiritual impact in people's lives. I brainstormed ways I could share the gospel in ways people want to hear, and medicine jumped out as a unique opportunity. As a doctor, you come alongside people in their worst moments. That was the fertile soil I was looking for. When you do something for someone that means a lot to them, they will be receptive to hearing about what means a lot to you.

Elsa: I grew up kind of all over the place. I lived in Indiana, New Jersey, Connecticut, and now Minnesota. I go to school in Wheaton, Illinois. I am the daughter of two educators, and my family is into English, philosophy and church history. Church has always been important to me, growing up in a Christian home. I didn't really think about medicine until college, where I unintentionally took biology for my science requirement. I really liked it and enjoyed learning about the human body and importance of health overall.



Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years, and how do you hope to use your medical training?

Dr. Sessions: My five-year plan is to be in Bemidji, Minnesota, that is, if the University of Minnesota will graduate me... I intend to work with Dr. Jason Caron, a Board Member for Scalpel, to gain wisdom and surgical skills before I go to the ends of the earth in search of a place to share the gospel with my orthopaedic skills. In 10 years, I hope to be overseas with intent to stay for 20 years, developing a hospital or coming alongside an established hospital.

Elsa: I don't have nearly that much direction, but hopefully in five years I will either be in or finishing school. Since I'm not sure of my career path, and different



amounts of schooling are required, it's hard to say. I definitely see myself doing something in healthcare. While I'm not sure what I intend to pursue, I'm certain I want to glorify God in all I do and touch people's lives.

There are many medical organizations with a similar model. What made you interested in partnering with Scalpel?

Dr. Sessions: There are many philanthropic organizations delivering healthcare, but not many keeping the gospel at the center. I wanted, first and foremost, a Christian organization. I also like that they partner with the local hospital and individuals like Isaac. Also, naturally, you find people you jive with. My first trip with people I immediately loved like Jason Caron, John Wechter, Peggy Gasior, and many others, make it easy to keep coming back.

Elsa: Scalpel is a perfect mix of three things important to me: medicine, Spanish and God. Spanish is something else I am studying right now, and my faith in God is the most important part of who I am; I want to share that. Scalpel is a really good fit for me. Another reason is Dr. Cole has been amazing and generous, providing me with opportunities and experiences. I've come to learn everyone involved with the organization is kind and wants to help me succeed.

Are there ways you plan to continue partnering with Scalpel?

Dr. Sessions: I've been on two trips, and I would love to continue with Scalpel. However, I have learned while I may have



good intentions and plans, it's all in the hands of God and outside of my control.

Elsa: Even if I drop medicine, I definitely still want to do things for Scalpel. This is one of the first things I've been part of that I've cared about to such a great extent. I really believe in the mission, and I feel honored to have this opportunity in the summer to work with them.

Has Scalpel impacted you personally or professionally?

Dr. Sessions: Yes! Mentorship from Dr. Caron and Dr. Cole has been really appreciated. Every time I come back from a mission trip, I feel rejuvenated and refocused. Our residency program director said she admired my purpose and work ethic. A big piece of that comes from knowing who I am fighting for firsthand. Untreated ortho trauma gives insight into how blessed I am. Knowing how much God gives me reminds me my life is not my own and I was bought at a price, giving me resolve to keep fighting.

Elsa: I have seen how mission work may be big part of your life while still

having a career. Obviously, that comes later in life with a surgical career, but I've seen [Dr. Cole] be extremely involved while continuing his profession. I've been encouraged by his example, that when I choose a medical career, I can still participate in mission work like Scalpel's. Working with Scalpel, I have opportunity to share exciting things happening and work for a cause so many worked hard before me to make possible. Personally, I feel I have been given an awesome opportunity.

Cody, as a veteran team member and someone whose goal is medical mission overseas, what advice would you give to Elsa as someone who is early in her career path?

Dr. Sessions: First, as I get closer the sacrifices seem so worth it! There were times when I questioned whether leaving my family in Colorado, studying for the MCAT, or being up all night in the hospital under incredible pressure could be worth it. But when you go to Peru and see firsthand what your training has prepared you to do, the sacrifices melt away. I also know we serve a God who encourages us to do things beyond our means. I would have never been a standout or won an award for

“ ...But when you go to Peru and see firsthand what your training has prepared you to do, the sacrifices melt away. I also know we serve a God who encourages us to do things beyond our means. ”

most likely to succeed academically. God opened doors I couldn't have opened. Early on I had meltdowns under insane pressure. As time has passed, I face increasingly pressure-filled situations with way less panic. I'm reminded of David and Goliath. David says, "but the LORD who was with me who helped me defeat the lions will certainly help me kill this philistine." David killed a lion before being ready for Goliath. God has been faithful through many hard things; I now expect his deliverance with much greater confidence. †

A MIRACLE UNFOLDS

Peter A. Cole, Jr., MHA

Through nearly two decades, Scalpel At The Cross effectively delivered more than \$8 Million of healthcare (JBJS), a metric palling in relation to the value of patients returned to livelihood, relationships developed and lives transformed. At the basic level, the ministry purposes to treat medical needs, while providing sustainable solutions enhancing patients' quality of life. In years past, this meant surgically treating fractures for crippling injuries and surrounding patients with clinical resources to ensure a quality outcome. More so, it meant receiving patients during their darkest moments and connecting them with a spiritual community to infuse them with hope extending beyond physical recovery. Having validated the efficacy of our model and listened intently to the needs of those we serve, our revamped mission doubles down on our longstanding commitment to Pucallpa and surrounding Amazon region by scaling our impact to settings up and downstream from the operative environment.

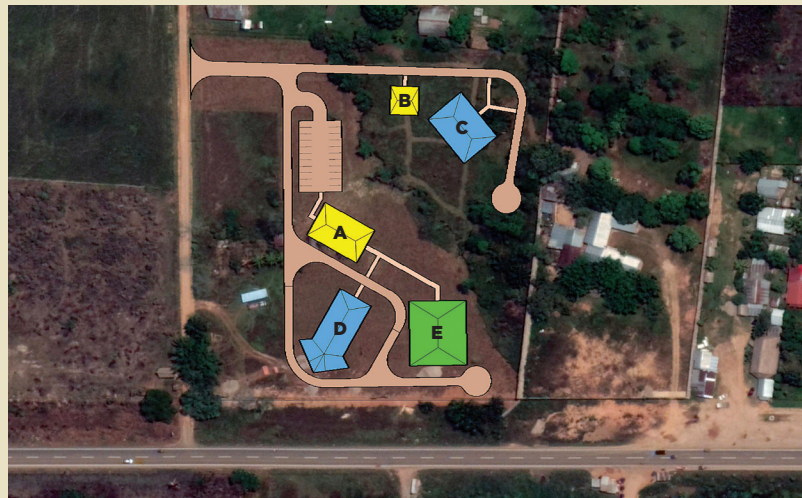
Against this background the concept and mission of The Miracle Campus was born to advance our impact through the development of a campus supporting the orthopaedic, socioeconomic and spiritual needs of our patient population and the people who serve them. By design, this campus involves significant orchestration and expertise of stakeholders in Pucallpa and stateside to ensure it becomes the best place, of highest standards, to recover from musculoskeletal injury in the Ucayali Amazon region of Peru.

A vision as impactful as this is not possible in isolation; it will rely upon a collective vision amongst our donors for advancing care around the greatest of earthly and eternal needs: one's health and spiritual condition. To this end, Scalpel At The Cross is launching a \$1 million capital campaign for construction of The Miracle Campus inclusive of the following facilities constructed in phases, with the goal of breaking ground once \$500,000 in financial support has been secured.

Miracle Campus Facilities:

- **Building A - Phase 1:**
 - o Orthotics & Prosthetics fabrication site
 - o Physical Therapy center
 - o Administrative offices
- **Building B - Phase 1:** Living quarters for local employees
- **Building C - Phase 2:** Guesthouse for visitors and healthcare personnel
- **Building D - Phase 2:** Chapel & Commons
- **Building E - Phase 3:** Space to scale and expand services

First Stage Miracle Campus Site Plan



Miracle Campus Vision:

- **Orthopaedic:** Elevate level of care provided in the Ucayali Amazon region by supplying local clinicians with a broader range of facilities, resources and training, offering patients the best possible experience and outcome
- **Socioeconomic:** Collaborate with local leaders to identify community assets and support sustainable development through educational exchange and job development in the areas of physical therapy, orthotics and prosthetics
- **Spiritual:** Bridge clinical and spiritual work with the infrastructure to welcome those we serve into a safe, all-encompassing campus home, where they may encounter the love of Christ, experiencing both physical and spiritual restoration

We are excited about the ways in which this extension of services will spur development in the local community, impacting lives through physical and spiritual restoration. We covet your prayers as this miracle unfolds. †

PRAYER & PRAISE

Nancy E. Cole, Director of Halo Ministries & Prayer Posse

"Oh My beloved, do not be anxious concerning tomorrow. You shall encounter nothing of which I am not already aware. My mercy is concealed within every storm cloud. My grace flows beneath every crosscurrent. My wisdom has conceived a solution to every perplexity. I have deliberately set obstacles in your path to test your prowess. I will not always cause favorable winds to blow upon your life, for then you would be at ease and would soon grow soft and dull. It is when the wind is high and the waves are threatening that you become alert and keen, and then I can strengthen your spiritual fiber. The storm is not a thing to fear but rather to welcome. As soon as you have made the discovery that in the time of stress and strain you have the clearest revelations of Myself, you will learn to head into the wind with sheer delight." -Frances J. Roberts

This year makes these words resonate more deeply than ever. They are instructive for my soul when seeking calm respite. How different from the world's message where self-reliance and autonomy are touted as having "arrived." Contrary to our nature to run to other shelters for protection, we are to take refuge in Him. He alone is our hiding place and our place of rescue. Conscious awareness of my complete helplessness is the means by which God's grace is freely apportioned to me.

Unless we acknowledge our desperation, weakness and neediness, however, we won't search for shelter in God. Mental grit will wrongfully become our mantra. But once we realize our helplessness and run humbly towards Him...our all-sufficient God promises to blanket us with tender grace and mercy under the shadow of His wing. Accurate self-assessment leads to soul care we are crafted to receive by Almighty God Himself. Psalm 31:19

summarizes well: "How abundant are the good things that you have stored up for those who fear you, that you bestow in the sight of all, on those who take refuge in you."

What good news this is, as we minister to our beloved Peruvian family, reeling from harsh effects of the pandemic. Unable to administer direct care, we point them upwards. We trust God who grants us full assurance of absolute success in the cause there. Thanks be to God for bold confidence and certainty that "The gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24) Oh that we who undertake to bring good news of the gospel may know, beyond the shadow of any doubt, the cause of world missions will triumph in spite of (or perhaps because of) the ravages of COVID. God's touch guarantees something for us, here or there...rest for the weary, comfort for the mourning, strength for the failing, and salvation for those in desperate need. Thank you, Jesus, for walking into suffering as both mission and vocation. If obedience in restoring health and bringing good news costs us something, let us be willing to cheerfully walk into that as well. Tune our hearts to sing your grace, tell of your salvation, and declare your Glory from everlasting to everlasting.

As we lean into God together, please lift up the following:

- our Miami Community, grieved from the fallen condo complex in late June.
- our heartfelt condolences as we lament together for: Esteban Cardona and family over the passing of his father- and uncle-in-laws in Colombia, from COVID; and Isaac Mendoza in the loss of his mother-in-law to COVID.



- Dr. Rosa's (former Peruvian Medical Director) husband, Miguel, home with pulmonary fibrosis following COVID. Pray for full-time work and resources for this family of five.
- Peru's transition to new leadership after recent run-off elections amidst much political unrest.
- ongoing lockdowns in Peru including Sundays and holidays.
- an administrative team's return to Peru, August 18-24, to evaluate resumption of campaigns, to solidify plans for the OP/OR Miracle Campus and to meet with local personnel to understand effective care models. For travel mercies, as Peru anticipates a possible third wave of infection by summer's end.
- Timmy Lindquist (former team member, pre-med student at Wheaton), living at Jungle Bunks, July 17-August 23, deepening relationships and considering missions upon completion of his studies.
- our work with Stewardship Planning Partners and our capital campaign for the OP/OR campus; a benefit hosted by 10-year-old Caleb Beyers (Phoenix, AZ), as a kickoff.
- our Scalpel Board's fall meeting in Asheville, North Carolina.
- Christian revival, as Peru heals from the pandemic and rebuilds beauty from ashes. ✝

AUGUST 2021

MISSION VITALS



2 Virtual Case discussions with surgeons in Peru



1 Bingo night connecting friends and spreading the Gospel



1 Collegiate presentation encouraging professionals to be missionally minded



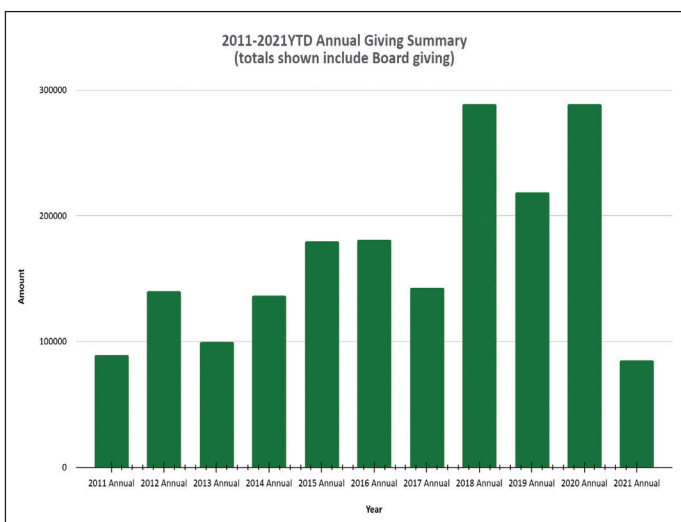
1 Professional presentation to surgical experts highlighting the need of orthopaedic surgeons in Low-and-Middle-Income countries



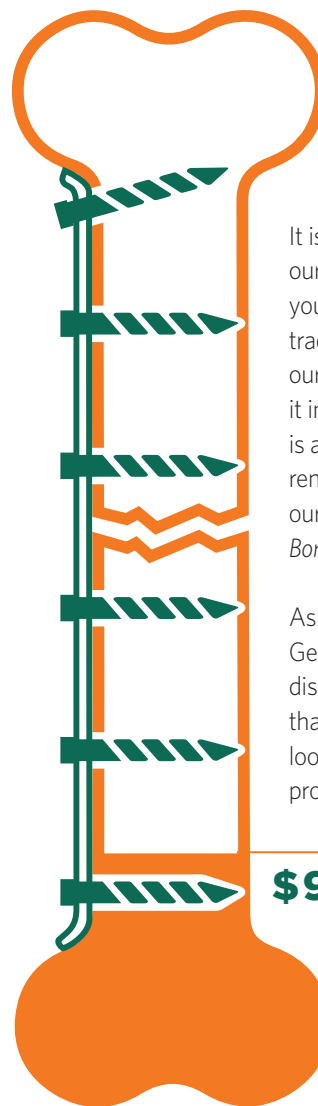
Monthly board discussions covering, "Encounters with Jesus" by Tim Keller



Isaac Mendoza's Peruvian devotionals spread across the internet



GOAL
\$1 MILLION



It is with great joy that we introduce our Bone-O-Meter! This will help you, our beloved Scalpel family, track fundraising progress during our capital campaign as we update it in each Scalpel's Edge issue. This is a beacon of hope and a prayerful reminder of the need. Please visit our homepage for real-time *Bone-O-Meter* updates.

As always, giving totals for our General Fund will continue to be displayed as a bar graph. We thank you for your support and look forward to seeing God's provision and mercy.

\$90,071

Online giving is easy and convenient at:
giving.ncsservices.org/scalpelatthecross
or contact us at: P.O. Box 558436, Miami, FL 33255
www.scalpelatthecross.org | 305-922-4486