



A 7.9 Earthquake in Peru



By Hernando Garzon, MD

ON AUGUST 15, a 7.9 magnitude earthquake hit the coast of Peru, killing at least 337 people in Ica, 265 kilometers from the coast and 165 kilometers south of Lima, Peru.

SSVMS member Dr. Hernando Garzon, who works in Emergency Departments at Kaiser North and Roseville, was part of a medical team dispatched to the devastated area. Some of his emails and photos follow.

Aug 19, 2007 7:03 a.m. Currently in transit in El Salvador. Expect to arrive in Lima in 6 hrs.

Aug 20, 2007 Met with the ministry of health, and made contact with 4 other local relief agencies (Caritas, Red Cross, Salvation Army...) Hired a 4WD vehicle and driver. Acquired local medications to supplement the trauma supplies brought from the U.S.

Plan to head down to Ica (the hardest hit city where most relief efforts are centered) at dawn tomorrow.

Aug 23, 2007

View of one camp from the stadium bleachers; 3,000 people in the camp and 7,000 outside. Population of the affected area is over 1 million, centered in three cities of 300K, 300K, and 170K each.



The poorest living in the simplest housing were affected the most. Spent the last 36 hrs in the earthquake impact zone and have scoped out various cities and towns - sometimes navigating roads covered with rocks. Met with the health minister for the country and the region. As expected things are chaotic and information is patchy and unreliable.

Have finally started to see some patients. Some have injuries from the earthquake, but most have the expected illnesses of impoverished people living in poor conditions - respiratory and GI illnesses.

Ran a clinic today in an area not previously serviced by medical teams. Between two doctors and a paramedic we saw 100 people - mostly elderly or young. Lots of respiratory disease. Moderate amounts of post earthquake trauma follow-ups.



My Spanish is invaluable.

In a big earthquake, aside from the destruction and injury, the chief feature is... dust which rises like a cloud over populated areas because of destruction of buildings. A Twin Tower cloud rising up from the earth.

September 4, 2007

Have finally made it home. Thank you all for your support! I would say our mission was successful. We did some very useful work, helped by running mobile clinics to remote areas, while completing our primary assignment which was medical needs assessment. After two weeks it seemed time to end our medical presence, as the in-country resources seem adequate to handle the current medical needs.



There is still a lot of disorganization in the government's response to the disaster, and still much work to do for the rebuilding process, but the emergency medical need has lessened significantly. Relief International still has a person there and will send others to work on projects related to rebuilding schools.

As with most events that don't affect our daily lives, the media coverage has now significantly lessened about Peru and the aftermath of the quake. But for those who were affected, it is still very real, and very difficult, and it will take years to get back to a 'normal' daily life.

Here is a before and after picture of a church where 100 people died during the earthquake

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