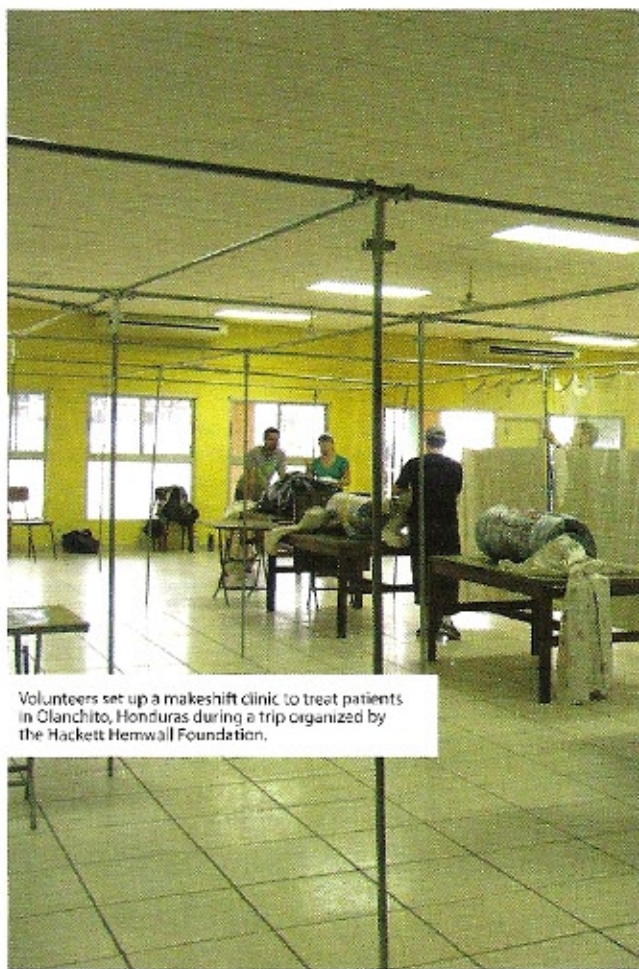




Honduran children play while waiting for family members to be seen at the free clinic set up in Olanchito, Honduras.



Volunteers set up a makeshift clinic to treat patients in Olanchito, Honduras during a trip organized by the Hackett Hemwall Foundation.

# SHARING OUR GIFTS

Dr. Annette Zaharoff provides medical care and offers advanced techniques to Hondurans in need of treatment.

[Special to NSIDE]

The walls of the makeshift clinic in Olanchito, Honduras, are made up of bed sheets hanging in a grid of PVC pipes, hastily constructed to create patient exam rooms and a waiting area.

For the past four years, Dr. Annette Zaharoff has called this clinic home for one week in March, as she and a team of more than a dozen physicians, nurses and assistants serve hundreds of largely poor residents from near and far – some of whom travel for miles, often by foot, to be treated.

The medical mission is organized by the Hackett Hemwall Foundation, a Wisconsin-based nonprofit organization dedicated to providing medical care to needy people around the world.

The foundation also focuses on research concerning the effectiveness of certain non-surgical medical procedures such as prolotherapy, which is used as a treatment for chronic pain, and vein sclerosing, which is used to help patients with varicose veins.

Physicians on the Honduras mission come from all over the world, paying their own way to make the journey so they can utilize this injection technique to treat hundreds of patients annually.

Prolotherapy and regenerative injection therapy involve the use of saline solution, blood platelets, stem cells and other naturally produced substances to stimulate the body's repair process.

"It puts the body into hyper-drive to heal an injury quicker than normal, or to heal an injury the body can't repair on its own," Zaharoff says.





Dr. Annette Zaharoff, left, oversees a prolotherapy injection treatment at a free clinic set up for villagers in Olanchito, Honduras.

Zaharoff, who heads the Non-Surgical Center of Texas on Huebner Road, is a pioneer in these non-surgical techniques, which can be used to treat neck and back pain, rotator cuff injuries, tennis elbow, carpal tunnel syndrome and degenerative hips. In fact, no one else in the San Antonio area (possibly in all of South Texas) uses prolotherapy and regenerative injection therapy to treat patients.

Zaharoff got involved with the Honduras project after attending a training seminar a couple of years ago at the University of Wisconsin, led in part by Dr. Jeffrey Patterson, director of the Hackett Hemwall Foundation, and Mary Doherty, the foundation's executive director.

"We had a dinner one night, and they showed a slideshow presentation of their last mission to Honduras," Zaharoff says. "There were pictures of people looking happy and fulfilled. It was really heartfelt. When I came home, I just felt a calling to want to be part of it."

According to Zaharoff, the Hondurans are incredibly appreciative of the medical services provided by the free clinic. Harsh physical labor is a daily fact of life for many Hondurans, particularly in rural communities, where the sight of people chopping and carrying wood for building material for homes

is common. Naturally, the lifestyle takes a toll on the bodies of the people there.

"Everyone walks there," Zaharoff says. "The more fortunate might have a mule, horse or maybe bicycles, but most people walk."

At the clinic, the day normally starts with a line

**"At the end of the day, that's why doctors go into practice of medicine to begin with: to heal people."**

of people already waiting by the time the medical team arrives at 7:30 a.m. The staff can treat about 100 people in the course of a 12-hour day, so many are often turned away in the first couple of days once the line gets too long. But they are encouraged to come back again the next day.

The mission also incorporates a residency program and continuing medical education, with lectures and training on how to properly utilize prolotherapy injections to promote pain relief and improved function of knees, joints, shoulders and more.

Physicians from China, Italy, Canada and Nicaragua have participated and taken their knowledge of the injection treatments back to their home countries.

Zaharoff serves as an instructor in the program during the medical mission. She is a firm believer in prolotherapy as an alternative to surgery in the treatment of chronic pain.

"At the end of the day, that's why doctors go into practice of medicine to begin with: to heal people," Zaharoff says. "Going to Honduras always makes me appreciate being an American. Seeing that kind of poverty and the way people deal with those hardships makes me proud to take part in a mission to share our gifts."

For more information about Dr. Annette Zaharoff and the Non-Surgical Center of Texas, call 210-616-0646 or visit [www.drzmd.com](http://www.drzmd.com).