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Operation airway: the first sustainable, multidisciplinary, pediatric airway surgical mission

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OBJECTIVE: This study aimed to describe the development and implementation of the first sustainable, multidisciplinary, pediatric airway surgical mission in an underserved country.

METHODS: This prospective, qualitative study was conducted for the first 4 Operation Airway missions in Quito, Ecuador. The major goals of the missions were to assist children with aerodigestive abnormalities, create a sustainable program where the local team could independently provide for their own patient population, develop an educational curriculum and training program for the local team, and cultivate a collaborative approach to provide successful multidisciplinary care.

RESULTS: Twenty patients ages 4 months to 21 years were included. Twenty-three bronchoscopies, 5 salivary procedures, 2 tracheostomies, 1 T-tube placement, 1 tracheocutaneous fistula closure, 2 open granuloma excisions, and 6 laryngotracheal reconstructions (LTRs) were performed. All LTR patients were decannulated. A new type of LTR (1.5 stage) was developed to meet special mission circumstances. Two videofluoroscopic swallow studies and 40 bedside swallow evaluations were performed. One local pediatric otolaryngologist, 1 pediatric surgeon, 3 anesthesiologists, 7 intensivists, 16 nurses, and 2 speech-language pathologists have received training. More than 25 hours of lectures were given, and a website was created collaboratively for educational and informational dissemination (<http://www.masseyeandear.org/specialties/pediatrics/pediatric-ent/airway/OperationAirway/>).

CONCLUSION: We demonstrated the successful creation of the first mission stemming from a teaching institution with the goal of developing a sustainable, autonomous surgical airway program.

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