

## Lena Dohlman, MD, MPH

My long term affair with Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO) began ironically enough on my honeymoon 30 years ago. My husband and I had recently finished our residencies, gotten married and were taking six months to travel around the world. I wanted very much to do medical humanitarian work during our time overseas. This was long before the internet and the explosion of interest in global health. It was difficult to find an NGO that didn't require a year or more commitment. Finally I heard about a group called "Orthopaedics Overseas," the forerunner of what would become HVO five years later. Fortunately I had married an orthopaedic surgeon and was able to convince the organization to put us both to work. Orthopaedics Overseas had a site in Makassar, Sulawesi, Indonesia (then called Ujung Pandang, Celebes), which was on our travel itinerary. The focus on teaching also appealed to us.

We arrived in Ujung Pandang during the monsoon season and settled into the guest house we would stay in for a few weeks. We were introduced to Dr. Chairuddin Rasjad and Dr. Indro Mulyono the sole orthopaedic surgeon and anesthesiologist on the island of 4 million people and were quickly incorporated into their daily clinical routines. The hospitality of the people, exotic culture, environment and food, the rare (to me) tropical and far advanced diseases and unusual medical equipment that we encountered all made a deep impression on me. I learned how to use an EMO inhaler with ether anesthesia and room air and saw diseases I had only read about. We were invited to a solemn wedding and a celebratory funeral in Toraja. We made friendships that lasted for years afterwards.

As with all my many trips since, I found I learned more than I taught. But I have also realized that my visits are appreciated for more than just teaching. The interest and encouragement I try to show and the sharing of ideas and cultures seems to be valued by those I have gotten to know in Indonesia, Saint Lucia, Vietnam, Malawi, and South Africa. My experiences with HVO have enriched my life immensely, have kept me stimulated and enthusiastic about education in anesthesia and has let me maintain my idealism from medical school to help people in need. Thank you HVO!

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Lena Dohlman, MD, MPH has been an active member of HVO since 1987. During the course of her membership, Dr. Dohlman has volunteered for eight overseas assignments, served as chair to the anesthesia program steering committee and presented numerous workshops about HVO and volunteering overseas. In 2009, Dr. Dohlman received HVO's prestigious Golden Apple Award for her work in designing and delivering primary trauma courses as part of HVO's anesthesia program in Vietnam. She is a member of the Massachusetts Society for Anesthesiologists, the American Society of Anesthesiologists, the American Society of Regional Anesthesia & Pain Medicine, Physicians for Human Rights, and the Society for Education in Anesthesia. Dr. Dohlman currently serves as program director to HVO's South African anesthesia program.

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