

For Immediate Release
February 12, 2009

Contact: Tom Quinn
Marketing Director
756-3513

OR Supplies Help Clinics in Need

“It serves the larger purpose of helping others. It just seemed like the right thing to do.”

That is how Dr. Ho Woon Lee, a general surgeon at Cortland Regional Medical Center, sums up his involvement in a project to help address the shortage of medical supplies in clinics in underdeveloped countries. Dr. Lee partnered on the project with Sharon Steadman, a SUNY-Cortland professor of sociology & anthropology and coordinator of the college’s International Awareness Club (IAC). The goal of the IAC is to provide a forum for students who are interested in the world to work together to raise awareness and funds to support global issues.

Dr. Lee contacted CRMC President/CEO Brian Mitteer to see how the medical center could help the students’ cause. Mitteer then sought the assistance of Karen Marsh, Nurse Manager-Surgical Services,

“There are instances when there may be opened, but unused surgical supplies in the Operating Room,” said Marsh. “Once items are out of their packaging, they are no longer sterile so cannot be used for a future procedure.”

Also, some items in the Operating Room inventory have expiration dates for use. If those dates are exceeded CRMC staff cannot use the supplies.

“There is nothing wrong with these unused items,” continued Marsh. “They just don’t meet our strict standards for sterility and quality, so we can’t use them. However, poor countries that often have little in the way of medical supplies, are eager to have them. So we’re happy to help.”

In November, OR staff began setting aside gowns, sutures, drapes, gauze, gloves, towels, and other unused supplies. By early February, three boxes were filled and ready for pick-up.

International Awareness Club members Sarah Voorhees and Erica Frerking made arrangements to stop by the Surgery Department to pick up the supplies. Now it's up to the IAC to prepare the boxes for shipment and distribution, in this case to benefit patients in clinics in Honduras (South America) and Malawi (Africa).

“Donations of this type can make a big difference to a clinic staff struggling to serve the needs of its patients.” concluded Dr. Lee. “We're just happy these supplies can still be put to good use.”

##