

RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER ON  
**Independent Living**



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## **Secondary Conditions Presentations Reveal Pressure Sore Cushion Need in Peru**

LAWRENCE, KS--In his many visits to Peru, Glen White was struck by the number of secondary conditions that people with disabilities there had.

“What do you need? How can we help you?” Those were the questions White, the director of the Research and Training Center on Independent Living at The University of Kansas, asked when meeting with Peruvians who had disabilities and disability organizations such as Improdesdi, Fundades, and Ann Sullivan del Peru.

The seminars in Lima generated a lot of interest, but getting to them proved problematic for many. “There is just little public transportation in Peru,” White said. “What there is are old buses and taxis.”

After the first seminar series, White and others helped interested audience members get to the next series. Their efforts paid off. Out of 180 audience members at the second seminar series, 85 used wheelchairs.

Using booklets developed by the Paralyzed Veterans Association and Powerpoint presentations with numerous illustrations, White held five seminars in 2004 and 2005 focused on pressure sores, urinary tract infections, bowel care, sexuality, and depression. His presentations were simultaneously translated and appeared on two screens.

A byproduct of his presentations, White discovered, was the high incidence of pressure sores and lack of protective cushioning to prevent them. “In Peru, they have no money, zip, for pressure cushions. Roho cushions, for example, there cost about \$500 and only the very rich can afford them. Hospitals send people home without cushions and no follow-up.

“One lady came to our seminars who used an alpaca blanket for a cushion. She had three Level 4 pressure sores. We gave her a cushion right away and told her to go to a hospital. She did and basically was sent home without treatment. But at least she has a cushion now that can protect her reasonably well.”

In response, White has been working with several local people to make cushions that will cost about \$10. “It’s not a workshop,” he said. “It’s an enterprise. In Peru, when someone gets out of the hospital, the person is given a lapboard and some candy to sell for rehabilitation. That’s not acceptable to me.”

The project has generated significant interest from hospitals.

What’s next? Alpaca jerky?

Maybe.

“A lot of tourists get thirsty hiking up to Machuu Pichu,” White said about the possibilities of supportive entrepreneurship in Peru.

The RTC/IL organized as an official Kansas University research center in 1980 with a \$2.5 million grant from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. Since its inception, the center has promoted disability advocacy, influenced public and media policy, and conducted research to better the lives of people with disabilities. .

The Research and Training Center on Independent Living is one of the 14 centers and more than 100 programs at KU’s Schiefelbusch Institute for Life Span Studies that offer research-based solutions for the problems of human and community development, disabilities and aging.