

Health Talents International
February 9-16, 2013
GYN/Plastic Surgery Trip

Trip Participants: Plastic Surgeons: Phillip Strawther, Dwayne Fulks; OBGYN: Jud Allen, Rusty Ethridge, Mark Kellum, Roy Kellum; Cardiologist: Quinton Dickerson; Pediatrician: Katy Farrell; PA: Kelsey Young; Oral Maxillofacial surgeon: Robert Lamb; Anesthesia: John Bennie, Yvette Riker, Tamara Cameron; Nurses/OR Tech's and Circulators: Courtney Goddard, Jan Harper, Scarlett Johnston, Kay Mims, Beth O'Brien, Tiffany Wood, Nancy Bennie, Ryan Beseda, Hannah Buzhardt, Ann Cross, Laura Driggers, Emily Ethridge, Val Ethridge, Freda Fuller, Joy Kellum, Brenda Robinson, Molly Vandivier, Micah Walden; Harding Nursing Students: Kasey Colburn, Meghan Przewski, Lauren Russell; Compassionate Caregivers: John Rodgers, Jan Reeder, Sandra Robinson, Mikayla Stallings, Wanda Lynch, Susan Kellum, Ann Dickerson, Marjorie Strawther, Paula Allen; Sterilization: Alfred Anderson, Bob Fuller, Doyle Robinson; Translator: Cynthia Allen, Chris Terrill; Team Leader: Julie Wheatley; Movie crew: Rick Harper, Rusty Prevatt, Dave Prevatt, Elliot Sisson

What a wonderful trip we had to Guatemala this week! The Nashville crew had a delayed flight and made it to the Guatemala flight with four minutes to spare and sure that they would arrive with no checked luggage. United Airlines surprised them all when every single bag made it to Guatemala on time. The team blew through customs like a warm tropical breeze and headed outside to meet the other team members from earlier flights. Unfortunately the weather in the North East United States was very different than the warm breeze in Guatemala which left Dr. John John Kaczmarek snowed in under more than 30 inches of snow. We were sad that Dr. Kaczmarek couldn't join the team but hoped that he could stay warm, although not as warm as we would be in Montellano!

Saturday night the team moved into the dorm and started working to inventory the supplies brought down in luggage that day. So, many team members pitched in by counting, organizing, recording and moving the supplies to the laboratory. Meanwhile the surgeons had patients patiently waiting for their arrival. The surgeons started to call the patients back to the exam rooms to visit with each one and decide which patients were surgical candidates. A big thank you needs to be sent out to all of our translators on this trip. Cynthia, Chris and Kelsey worked long hours to help make sure that translators were available when needed. Cynthia was up and ready to translate by 7am each morning and Chris stayed up until 1am or later each night to be sure that everything was settled in the recovery ward before he went off to rest. Kelsey popped from the OR to the clinic rooms and helped out wherever she was needed. Their hard work made a great impact on the trip and we are certainly indebted to them for their help.



Lots of sweet little babies with cleft lips or palates were there to greet the team upon arrival. The plastic surgeons certainly had their work cut out for them. Nurse Sheri K. from HTI's Highland operation has taken a lot of initiative to identify babies in need of this type of surgery. Sheri helped coordinate transportation and helped educate the parents before bringing them to Clinica Ezell. She also stayed and helped out at the clinic throughout the week translating, comforting worried parents, and being all around great. Everyone was glad that Sheri was around to help, she is a jewel.

Saturday night we had a short orientation time and a nurses meeting before saying goodnight and wandering off to bed. Next thing we knew the sun was up and the strange sounding birds were calling outside our windows...it was time for breakfast! Sunday morning was still full of activity as team members scurried around the OR's getting them set up and ready for their first patients with others walked around Clinica Ezell admiring the beautiful surroundings. The team attended church with the Montellano Church of Christ that morning where Carlos Baltodano, HTI's Director of Coastal Operations preached, mostly in Spanish but with a little English thrown in for those of us who didn't follow so well in Spanish. After church there were many hugs, handshakes and smiles shared between those from the congregation and those visiting. Mrs. Linda Osborn even had a chance to say hello to her ABC child Carlos who is now in middle school and is making good grades.

Orientation time with Dr. Walter and nurse Rosario followed the church service. Dr. Walter took the team through the procedures needing to be followed at Clinica Ezell and Rosario shared a few words of thanks for the work the team would do throughout out week. Once all the details had been discussed

we dug in to the delicious lunch prepared by our kitchen staff. With full bellies we set off to the hospital area to begin surgery. Several of our compassionate caregivers and nurses had the afternoon free on Sunday so they headed out to the cacao farm for a little adventure. Three other team members, Sandra, Molly and Freda went the extra mile by giving one unit of blood each to hold in our blood bank in case of emergency. We always hope that the blood won't be needed but are certainly grateful for the peace of mind that comes with knowing it is available should it be necessary.

The Sunday cases went very well with no complications until OR room two was on their last case of the day for plastic surgery when the bovie electrosurgical unit stopped working. Thankfully they were able to get a bovie from OR room one as they were finished up for the day. The remaining problem was what to do about having three OR's worth of patients and surgeons with only two working bovie units?! Surgery could not continue in three OR's without this imperative piece of equipment and no one on our team had the skills to fix the broken unit. Julie and Carlos started making calls to contacts in the country to find out if there was a working bovie unit out there somewhere that we could borrow for the rest of the week.

As we were discussing what to do to work three OR's worth of surgeries into two OR's by lengthening our hours and changing our schedules we were simultaneously praying that God would work out a solution and provide for this urgent need. Meanwhile, Rick Harper and Kemmel were sitting at dinner in Chichicastenango discussing who to call about borrowing a bovie. They were overheard by another gentleman in the restaurant. The man came over to them and asked if he had heard correctly that they were in need of a bovie, he followed that by saying that he had one in the back of his truck that we could borrow!!!! Apparently he is a missionary in Guatemala who helps support himself by fixing up medical equipment and such and just happened to have a bovie he recently repaired with him at that moment. The ways of our Lord are wonderful and mysterious! This man didn't just happen to be at the right place at the right time, there was a divine appointment made and God sent him to us in our time of need. On top of loaning a working bovie to us this man accepted our malfunctioning bovie and two other old bovies we had at Ezell and promised to do his best to get them in working order once again. The loaner bovie was at Clinica Ezell by 8am the next morning and surgery was able to carry on without any further delay, may the glory be to God.

Sunday night after dinner time we gathered together for a short devotional time and went around the room introducing ourselves. Our team had come together from 11 different states reaching from California to South Carolina. We laughed some together and sang a few songs, praised God for His miraculous provision in our time of need and asked His blessings of the rest of the week.



Monday morning we were off to an early start with breakfast at 7am and things rolling in the OR by 8am with the borrowed bovie and lots of prayers of thankfulness to God for his graciousness. The day held a full schedule of patients for all three OR rooms. Things went smoothly both in the OR and back in recovery for most of the day. Micah, an intensive care RN, was asked to help the anesthesia staff in the OR. He was thrilled to spend the week helping care for patients alongside the anesthesia staff and hopes to one day become a CRNA himself. We were grateful to have such a skilled RN who was able to step in and fill that needed position in the OR so that surgery could keep rolling on.

Dr. Robert Lamb, an oral/maxillofacial surgeon and member of HTI's board of directors had a busy week ahead of him. Dr. Silvia Albizurez and Dr. Heidy Alonzo the two dentists at Clinica Ezell had a stock pile of patients in need of Dr. Lamb's skills. They had done all the ground work and even sent Dr. Lamb some x-rays and information about a few of their patients before the trip. Having Dr. Lamb come and share his skills with their dental patients was thrilling for Drs. Silvia and Heidy. They were so grateful that their patients who needed that extra help could be cared for by such a wonderfully skilled surgeon. Dr. Lamb worked long days assisted by Dr. Silvia and her dental clinic staff. By the end of the week he had done 20 surgeries in the dental clinic and one case in the OR where a man had a wisdom tooth buried high up in the bone almost reaching his eye socket! Thankfully Dr. Lamb's patients recovered well and knew that they had been touched by the hands of Christ working through Dr. Lamb.



The crew in the sterilization room was stellar. Alfred, the sterilization room guru had Bob and Paula trained in no time which helped him and Doyle free up some time to get to work on autoclaves that had been malfunctioning and other things on a long “to do” list. HTI is blessed to have the constant participation of people like Alfred and Doyle who know how to run things and keep surgery going smoothly. This sterilization crew was top notch not only because they did such a great job but they also kept the team members stocked with plenty of yummy snacks! Perhaps their motivation isn't all pure, they like to have the visitors too. ;)

Monday night the surgical team welcomed Rick Harper and a team of videographers from Franklin Pictures out of California. Rusty, Dave and Elliot had been in the Chichicastenango area with HTI's highland operation filming and had finished up getting the footage they needed from that area. Rick brought them down to Clinica Ezell so that they could get some footage of the coastal work and surgery. All of their filming efforts will be put together to make a video for Health Talents to help show more about the work going on in Guatemala. Many jokes were made about being movie stars!



Tuesday was another smooth day in the OR. In recovery however, one patient, Petrona, was not feeling so well post op. The nurses kept a sharp eye on her and in the early evening decided it was time to do a hematocrit test on her. The hematocrit showed her blood levels to be very low. The GYN's decided that the best treatment for Petrona would be to give her some of the blood our wonderful team members had donated for just a case like this. Petrona was moved to the immediate post op area where Micah once again came to the rescue and sat with her as the blood was administered and she slowly started to feel better and we watched as her vitals normalized. Once again God was gracious and provided for this sweet patient with the best care possible. Our blood donors were also happy to see that the sacrifice of their life sustaining blood was now helping to sustain the life of another of God's

children. What beautiful imagery is tied into the giving of blood from one to another; just as Christ gave his blood so that we might live eternally.

The week seemed to be flying by when Wednesday rolled around. The OR had another full day and the recovery ward was packed full of patients. Sweet little ladies recovered from their gyn surgeries while loving mothers comforted their children who had already had surgery and were recovering and learning to eat and drink with their new lips and palates freshly mended. The mother of Amarilis, a two year old cleft lip patient, sat outside the OR doors waiting for her beloved child to come back from surgery. She had reassurances from Sheri and several other team members that things were going just fine and her daughter would be out shortly. When the moment came for Amarilis to wake up she was carried from the OR by (John or Tamara?) and placed in her mothers' arms. As the mother looked upon the face of her child for the first time she said "She is so beautiful". Thankfully this is a story that we have the honor to see repeated over and over again as children who have always had their father's eyes go back for surgery on their cleft lip and come out of the OR whole and now also sharing their mother's smile.

The nurses and compassionate caregivers who worked in recovery did such a wonderful job all week long. They had so many patients, so many crying babies, so many anxious mothers and so many people to love! Mrs. Marjorie was back at her usual routine this week as well. Each day she came around to gyn patients as she got them up out of bed and walking around in a conga line. Mrs. Marjorie always brings joy and happiness to the patients, they love seeing this spunky lady coming each day to make them laugh and help them get their exercise. In addition to our RN's and Caregivers's we were happy to host Kasey, Meghan and Lauren, three nursing students from Harding University. HTI enjoys inviting nursing students to come on surgical teams because we know it is a great experience for these young aspiring nurses. Laura and Hannah who worked night shift all week along with Ann were once Harding nursing students themselves, as was Micah Walden. They have come each year since they first came as students and we love having them back year after year and hope that Kasey, Meghan and Lauren will also become HTI veterans with a long history of mission trips to Guatemala.

This team did not have a designated trip chaplain so several of the men from the team stepped up to the plate and worked together to fill this role. Dr. Dwayne Fulks led the devotional talk on Monday night and Doyle Robinson shared on Tuesday night. Rick Harper was able to offer his comments on Wednesday night and the group had devotional out in the courtyard on Thursday giving everyone a chance to share what was on their heart. For not having had a designated chaplain on the trip we sure did luck out with great thoughts from these three men who pointed our hearts toward God and recognizing His presence and his work in our world. On Wednesday night we had a very special presentation during our devotional time. Dr. Quinton Dickerson, one of HTI's long time board members was able to present our newest employee Dr. Nehemias Lopez Yes with a Bible where his name had been engraved. Nehemias was a Bates Scholarship student studying medicine with HTI. He has finished up all his schooling and government service and began working with us in January of this year. We are proud to have such a fine young doctor join our work and look forward to serving many years alongside Dr. Lopez. In addition to Nehemias' presentation Carlos Baltodano presented an engraved plaque given by Dr. Nidian Patricia Poz to Health Talents International. Dr. Nidian Patricia is another medical school

Bates Scholar who has completed her studies and is now working on her year of government service before joining HTI full time in 2014. Dr. Nidian praised God and thanked HTI for the help provided to her over the years so that she might become a doctor. After this emotional devotional time we said goodbye to the video crew and Rick since they were to depart early the next morning. Next we said goodnight and headed off to bed.



Thursday morning we had a lighter schedule in the OR with only plastic surgery cases and one oral surgery case. The majority of the team headed out mid-morning for Lake Atitlan and the town of San Lucas Toliman. They enjoyed a relaxing morning driving up the mountain and away from the hot humid air of Montellano and a nice lunch overlooking the beautiful lake and gardens of Hotel Toliman. Once Dr. Lamb finished up his surgery in the OR he and a few others headed out to Irtra, a hotel/resort area about an hour and a half away from Clinica Ezell. They got to go and see the interesting architecture of the buildings there and even stopped by the cacao farm on their way back to Montellano. They certainly had a nice afternoon of sightseeing.

On Friday we had breakfast, took our group photo and then loaded the bus headed for Antigua. When we arrived in Antigua it was a beautiful sunny day, perfect for walking the cobblestone streets and doing

some sightseeing. The group headed out for lunch, the market and massages. That night we all came back together for dinner at Hotel Antigua. We shared a nice dinner and said farewell to those leaving on early shuttles. The next morning we had time for breakfast before we jumped on the bus to the airport. Everyone made it safely to the airport and we thanked God for another week blessed by His wonderful presence.



By: Julie Wheatley