

Health Talents International
April 14-21 General/GYN/Urology Surgery Clinic

Trip Participants: General Surgeon: George Haight; Urologist: Grady Bruce, David Freidberg; GYN: Ana Maria Gray, Jillian Woodruff, Julie Biroshak; Anesthesiologist: Jeff Bennie, William Weems; CRNA: Rachael Smith, Janith DeHaven; OR and Recovery Staff: Glenn Berkey, Michael Caldwell, SJ Hemingway, Valerie Tollison, Peggy Hazard, Melina Calderon, Joe Calderon, Lisa Barte, Neva Berkey, Sharon Depmore, Lisa Gawle, Joanna Grothe, Miriam Hobbes, Lauren Holmes, Lauren Moore, Katie Ritter, Randy Sims, Tammy Smith, Fran Sutton; Translator: Mary Beth McCown; Caregivers: Lori Bridges, Janice Fuller, Doris Jendrix, Beverly Mihelich, Mindi Tipps, Gary Tucker; Counseling group: Allison Torres-Cruz, Raul Alvarado, Klay Barte, Kallie Barte; Sterilization: Adam Cotter, Steve Cotter, Jesse Pettengill, Melinda Sanders; Chaplain: Roger McCown; Team Leaders: Rick Harper, Julie Wheatley

What a great and busy week we had! Our team was filled with lots of veterans and many first timers. We had a great group from the Brentwood Oaks Church of Christ who came down to experience firsthand the ministry that they so generously support. We had an equally impressive group of OR staff from Nashville recruited by Dr. Jeff Bennie and a special group of family and marriage counselors from Harding. The team flew down to Guatemala on either Friday or Saturday and all team members made it to Guatemala with luggage and had no trouble going through customs.

On Saturday morning the counseling group headed to Chichicastenango with Kemmel and Lisa Dunham. They spent the first part of the week in that area hosting a marriage seminar for the local Christians. The seminar was a big hit and blessing to all those who attended. After finishing up their time in Quiche, Klay, Allison, Raul and Kallie headed down to Montellano to join the rest of the team and host another seminar for the Montellano Church of Christ. They had great success once again and a full house for the marriage seminar. HTI is grateful to Klay for spearheading our efforts to implement this portion of our ministry. This was Klay's third trip down to hold seminars focused on improving familial relationships and helping our Guatemalan brothers and sisters learn new ways of communicating and understanding one another.

The bulk of the team headed down to Ezell on Saturday like normal. Upon arrival the flurry of activity began as the team moved in to the dorm, unloaded supplies and started seeing patients for the following day's surgery schedule. Fran and Lisa, our head nurses also took some time to review the nursing plans with Rosario. Having a nursing meeting with the head nurses and Rosario and Darling is something newly instituted by the nursing committee of HTI's Board of Directors. Mrs. Alice Bush designed a wonderful chart with the help of Rick to better control the Demerol usage in the recovery room. The meeting covered this chart as well as the different roles to be carried out by the native nurses and the volunteers on the team. Little by little we continue to improve our effectiveness and organization at Clinica Ezell which will hopefully help us to always improve our patient care and treatment. Later Saturday evening we had a brief orientation time followed by good night hugs and we were off to bed.

Sunday morning was lovely as the team woke up and enjoyed breakfast together before heading across the street to worship. The service at Montellano church of Christ was nice with Carlos Baltodano preaching and Rick Harper leading the group in a few English songs. After church Dr. Walter and nurse Rosario gave the medical orientation to the group. We always appreciate their taking the time to talk with our teams and help them understand the way things run at Clinica Ezell. After this meeting and lunch the OR crew headed to the hospital to get things going. Sunday was a long day as surgery always goes a little slower on days when the team is adjusting to working together. All together we had four GYN, five urology and five general surgery cases.

Monday was a full day for all. A few team members headed out to mobile clinic with Dr. Walter while others made their way to the recovery room or OR. The OR area was blessed with a veteran sterilization crew that kept things rolling with no bumps in the road at all. Jesse, Steve, and Adam also did a great job of welcoming Melinda and Gary to their crew by training them and showing them how to run a great sterilization room. Having a great team like this in sterilization makes a huge difference on a busy surgical trip like this one! Thankfully there were so many helping hands that Adam was freed up to spend a good chunk of time in the operating rooms observing and assisting where needed. Adam has decided to pursue a career in medicine so we were happy to get him into the middle of things to learn and observe what he could. Monday yielded a total of five GYN, seven urology and eight general surgeries.

Monday evening Roger led our first devotional time. Having a veteran missionary to Guatemala as the trip chaplain was a treat! Roger consistently brought new ideas and understanding to the experiences we were having each day. He led our hearts closer to our Heavenly Father by helping us to open our eyes to His work around us. He also helped us to have a greater understanding of the people we were working with throughout the week. The team was certainly blessed by his knowledge and leadership.

Tuesday was another full day. More team members headed out to mobile clinics as well as a couple who headed out to visit La Fortuna with Oscar and Obdulio our community development guys. Mindi and Janice were the first to go out with Oscar and Obdulio this week and were impressed and excited upon their return. They enjoyed seeing the homes of the villagers of La Fortuna and were excited to see the beautiful crops they had growing there. Later in the week a few other team members went out with our community development guys and were also excited to see the good work going on in the villages. Gary was particularly impressed with a talk he saw Oscar giving to a local woman. He had a pamphlet with pictures he used to help discuss good hygiene, clean water, smokeless stove and how to care for ill family members! All together we had five gyn, six urology and eight general surgery cases on Tuesday. The biggest case of the day was in the urology room. Doctors Grady and David performed a prostatectomy removing about 80% of their patient's prostate. The patient did well in surgery but later that night his blood count was dropping. Thankfully the local lab came out and we were able to transfuse blood to our patient. We were so grateful to Melinda and Josué, one of our staff at Ezell who donated blood. The patient did well and was up and walking around within a couple of days. Mary Beth was sweet to sit with him and work in exercising his legs before walking while also being sure to pray with him and share the light of Christ.

Wednesday we had four GYN surgeries, four urology and eleven general surgeries. Wednesday was special as the counseling group finally joined the team on the coast. We were happy to welcome them to Clinica Ezell and excited about their seminar the following day. The nurses in the recovery room had things well under control by the time Wednesday rolled around. The nurses worked so well together and were great about pitching in whenever they were needed. The patients and the local TSI team members could all tell that we were well staffed as a result of the wonderful individual attention each patient received from the nurses.

Thursday was a lighter day in the OR with only general surgery taking place. There were a total of eight surgeries performed by Dr. Haight and our two urologists. Two groups of team members made their way up to San Lucas Toliman for a nice lunch and a reprieve from the heat of Montellano. The groups were thrilled to have a chance to see more of the country, to enjoy a nice meal on the porch overlooking the beautiful Lake Atitlan. Both groups traveled safely and made it back to Montellano in time to relax, pack and check in on the patients before dinner.

The devotional time that evening started out around the fountain but had to be moved inside when the light sprinkle turned into more of a constant drizzle. We made it inside just in time too since shortly after we all made it in the storm really picked up! The time of sharing was encouraging and heartwarming for everyone on the team. The week had gone well, patients were recovering nicely, hearts had been touched, prayers had been prayed and God had blessed us all.

Friday morning the group had breakfast and then gathered for a group picture by the Clinica Ezell sign before jumping onto the nice air conditioned bus and heading to Antigua. The day in Antigua was perfect as always. Everyone headed out to a variety of lunch spots, the GYN girls attacked the market place and had bags of goodies to show for it! That evening the team had a nice buffet dinner at Hotel Antigua and was joined by many members of the HTI Board of Directors who had flown in for the board meeting taking place over the next couple of days. After dinner we all said good night and headed to our rooms to rest up.

The buffet breakfast the following morning was extra delicious with made to order omelets and crepes! The team ate their fill before loading up and heading to the airport. Thankfully everyone arrived in plenty of time and made it back to the states safely. We thank God for yet another safe and productive mission.

By: Julie Wheetley



