

Health Talents International

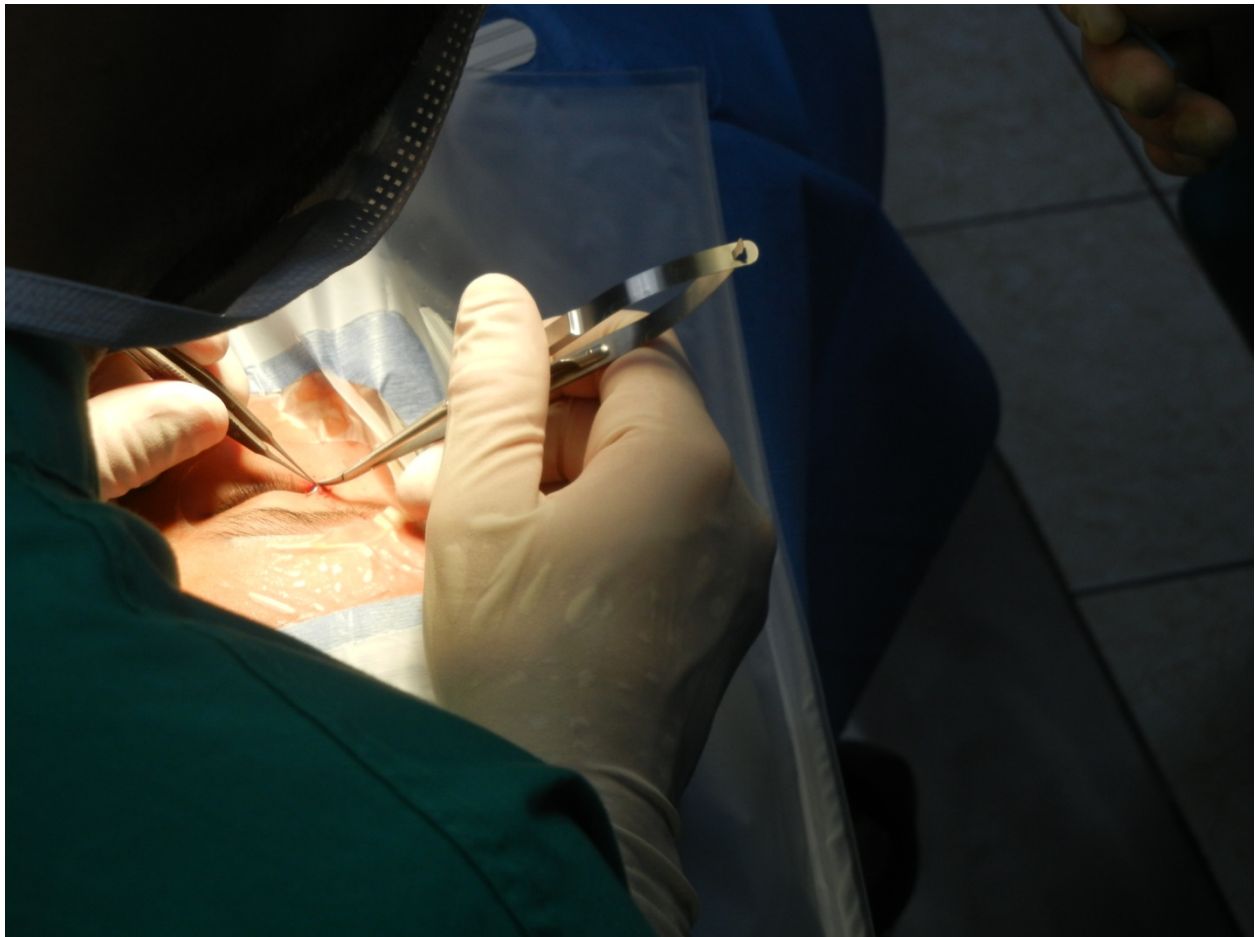
Eye Surgery Trip

July 13-20, 2013

Trip participants: Ophthalmologist: Lee Coleman, John Shipp; Eye Tech: Amy Coleman, Jennifer Shipp; RN: Barbara Jones; Pre-Med Student: Sean Koch; Caregivers: Madeline Coleman, Walker Coleman, Claire Coleman, Christian Robertson, Steve Watson, Lexie Funderburk; Character Program: Matt Berube, Chuck Hicks, Nancy Land, John Land, Charles Campbell, Rachel Berube, Kelsey Welch; Sterilization: Jane Watson; Team Leader: Julie Wheatley

Mission teams come in all shapes and sizes, this particular team was rather small for all the work done in a week's time! With 21 people from 6 different states we were able to see 87 patients, perform 49 surgeries, and host 4 days of character development programs for local school children and the children from the Montellano church of Christ. We were busy!

Entering the country was a slow process on this day. Our flights were spread out by a couple hours due to a delay so after the first group arrived they threw their suitcases into a pick-up truck and headed back into the airport for a relaxing lunch and a good cup of Guatemalan coffee. The second wave of team members arrived, made it through customs with all their luggage and we hit the road.



The surgeons Lee and John had their hands full with patients waiting to be seen as soon as we arrived at Clinica Ezell. The team divided up and got to work. Several team members started inventorying supplies that came down in suitcases, others began to check vision of the patients waiting to be screened for surgery and Amy headed down to the OR with Sean and Jennifer close at her heels. Amy has come with Lee so many times that she knows just how to run the OR for these eye surgery weeks. Jennifer, Sean and Barbara all followed Amy's lead as she trained them on what needed to be done to set up the supplies, arrange the OR, prepare the patients pre-op and then clean the surgical instruments post-op before turning them in to Jane in the sterilization room.



This was Dr. John Shipp's second trip down but the first time he was able to bring his lovely wife along. John and Jennifer were a great team. This was Jennifer's first real experience in the OR with John and she shined. Barbara Jones our only RN on the team was a HUGE help as well. She learned the drill quickly and after just a couple cases she had it down pat. Barbara was like a butterfly who flitted in and out of the room at the blink of an eye and before you knew it had the OR flipped over and ready for the next case. People like Barbara are invaluable on a surgical mission like this. They keep things flowing and moving quickly so that the "dead" time between cases is minimized and patients aren't expected to wait as long for their surgery as a result.

Before we knew it Sunday was under way. We had a nice worship time at the Montellano church of Christ and were given the opportunity to head down to the river after church and celebrate with a new brother in Christ, Henry as he was baptized for the remission of his sins. After the baptism we made our way back to Ezell and as soon as lunch was over the OR crew headed back for surgery. That day was a little slow as there were only four cases. Lee and John were able to work together in surgery and knock out the clinic patients fairly easily as well. Thankfully all the cases went smoothly and the team gathered for devotional time after dinner that evening.



John Land the HTI Board President and Charles Campbell, former Board President did the honors of serving as team chaplains. They worked well as a team leading us each night to draw near to the heart of God. They used the Psalms and had us meditate upon David's words as he poured his heart out to God. The book *The Golden Rule* was read to each group of students who attended the character program so Charles decided to read it to us during our devotional time one night. It was amazing the power and truth that a children's book can contain. The story shared with the reader a conversation between a grandfather and his grandson about how the Golden Rule exists throughout the world. The story made the point that if people worldwide were to follow this simple rule how different our world would be...how much better our world would be.

On Monday things were in full swing. Patients were being looked after by the most compassionate of caregivers while the OR staff worked to restore sight to the blind. Each week day we were able to have a couple people go out to mobile medical clinics with the HTI full time staff, or to help deliver ABC supplies. On Monday Steve and granddaughter Claire went out with Luis to visit ABC families and deliver supplies. They loved getting to play with kids and joke around with the little Spanish that Steve had been practicing. Steve was a fun addition to the team all week long. He kept patients entertained and feeling special!



Tuesday was a lighter day in the OR, the team was finished up with all their cases by lunch time so they added some of the patients for the following day to the afternoon schedule. Their surgeries were going very well and continued to do so throughout the week. Tuesday was the second and busiest day for the character program group. Nancy, John, Charles, Rachel, Matt, Chuck and Kelsey spent a lot of time planning and putting together a truly sensational program for the children. The local school principal requested that we host a character building program with a focus on anti-bullying. She said that bullying isn't a big problem in her school but she wanted to educate the children about the negative effects of mistreating others before it ever becomes a problem. Nancy with all her years as an educator took the task in hand and developed a skit, an activity, found a video and a book which all tied in together. The theme of the character program was the Golden Rule. The puppet skit, movie and story all helped the children see the importance of treating others as we would like to be treated, even when it is difficult. One student after sitting through the whole program asked his teacher "so that is how I am supposed to act isn't it professor?" His professor agreed with him and applauded him for paying such great attention to this important message.



A special presentation of the character program was presented to the Montellano church of Christ children on Tuesday afternoon. The kids came over to Clinica Ezell and were so excited to be having their Bible class in the big open room at Ezell. They quickly fell in love with the puppets and were enthralled by the video. It was such a nice experience to share this special time with the children and adults who so often host our teams in their church home. The Montellano congregation is such a warm body of believers and seeing the eagerness to learn and fall more in love with God in the faces of the children gave us hope for the future of the church in Guatemala.

By Wednesday this team was working like a well oiled machine. The OR crew were fully trained and Amy said that she had such great helpers that she scrubbed in less on this trip than she had in a long time. It was nice to see the group come together and work beautifully. One of the bitter sweet things we saw on this trip was the increased number of patients who were not surgical candidates. There were a total of 38 patients seen in clinic who weren't able to have surgery. Most of these patients had glaucoma or macular degeneration because of diabetes. It was sad to have to turn away so many patients with the bad news that their vision couldn't be easily restored with a surgery the following day but the positive side is that we were able to offer treatments to many of these patients which will help relieve their pain and help retain what eye sight they still have. There were three special young patients we saw with traumatic cataracts. All three of these children are candidates for surgery but were referred to the March 2014 clinic so that they could receive general anesthesia instead of local for their cases. The surgeons on this trip weren't too keen on operating on 9 year olds without general anesthesia! That means that our March team will have at least three fun little patients to love on.

It isn't very common for us to have young patients during the eye teams so the spring break students will certainly enjoy these young ones next year.

The last few cases of the week were wrapped up on Thursday by lunch time. God had blessed the team so richly as he watched over the surgeons hands, the drivers to clinics and ABC deliveries and over the children's program. We always recognize His hand at work and remember to lift up our thanks offering each time we have a successful, complication free surgical mission at Ezell. Since the surgeries were all wrapped up, most of the team headed out to the cacao farm for a little exploration. They loved seeing how massive the ceiba tree was, tasting the fruit of the land and seeing the beautiful view of the river. They got back to Ezell and a bunch of the younger team members hit the soccer field with some friends from the HTI staff and neighbors from Montellano. The soccer was top notch, next thing we know we will have a Clinica Ezell team in the world cup!



Dr. John and Jennifer Shipp had to say goodbye that afternoon so the team paused the soccer game just long enough for a few hugs and teary goodbye. Thankfully John and Jennifer made it to Guatemala City safe and sound and were home the following day in time for a wedding rehearsal where their daughter had a starring role as a flower girl.

Thursday night the team gathered for a the traditional time of sharing during the devotional hour. It was beautiful to hear how God had worked throughout the week in both the lives of our team and the lives of our patients and Guatemalan co-workers. After devotional time we said goodnight and rested up for the big day in Antigua the following day.

After breakfast the last few patients were discharged from the hospital, the team took the group photo leaving room to photo shop the Shipp's in! Shortly thereafter we were on our way to Antigua, markets, good food and sunshine! The day in Antigua passed by quickly and before we knew it dinner time had arrived. That evening we were joined by Cary and Rita Sills, friend's of HTI who are currently living in Antigua. We all shared a lovely meal together and stayed at the table talking for quite a while. This team certainly enjoyed being together!

Saturday morning we enjoyed the Hotel Antigua buffet before saying goodbye to the Coleman crowd who were staying over an extra day in Antigua. The Montgomery crew, Sean and Julie headed out for the airport and thankfully arrived without any delays. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!