

HEALTH TALENTS INTERNATIONAL

Surgery Clinic Trip Report

June 1-8, 2013

Team Members: Surgeons: Drs. Erica Barrette, Ben Doke, Charles Gross, Brady Locke and Kirby Sweitzer; Anesthesiologist Drs. Brian Alexander, David Crasto and Joey Tilton; Physician Assistant: Tiffany Locke; Nurses: Margaret Bell, Anora Burke, Lisa Cantrell, Jeanie Damren, Leslie Doke, Dave Farrow, Kathy Griffin, Kasey House, Erin Leap, Carol Matthews, Gretchen Metheny, Lauren Russell, Sheri Kretzschmar, Julie Williams; Med Tech: Carrie Anderson; Medical Students: Jeremy Archer, Nick Freidberg; Dental Student: Clint Sweitzer; Nursing Students: Claudia Morales, Alyssa Smith; PreMed Student: Brandi Clark; PreNursing Student: McKenzie Teague; Sterilization: Charlie Gross, Susan Harper; Caregivers: Katie Alexander, Dave Crasto, Jr., Aimee Greeter, Jessica Hynds, Jessica Jacobs, Kay Reiboldt, Keith Sweitzer and Morey Wilson; Translator: Sara Robb; Trip Chaplain: Bode Teague; Trip Leaders: Rick Harper, Dave Mellor and Susan Mellor.

Our Midland, TX team members, Lisa Cantrell and new HTI ministry team members Dave and Susan Mellor arrived in Guatemala City on Friday night due to connection times and available flights on Saturday. Three members, Jeremy Archer, Dave Farrow and Jessica Hynds were already in Guatemala and touring the country, so they simply met us at the airport on Saturday afternoon. The Delta and United travelers arrived within a few minutes one another, though the same cannot be said for the luggage of a few Delta travelers.

We've become accustomed to lost luggage, but I'll never get used to poor and indifferent service. While the luggage of our Delta travelers was in Guatemala by the next day, Delta refused to deliver it until Tuesday and this despite the fact that one of those missing luggage, Kay Reiboldt, is a Delta Gold flier and her husband Max, a Health Talents board member has logged more than 2,000,000 miles with Delta. While Kay did not "feel the love from Delta" she received plenty from our sweet patients during the week and since the missing bags contained mostly supplies, she waited patiently.

Our trip to Ezell on Saturday was smooth, only one detour through a sugar cane field and we arrived shortly after 3:30. Plenty of time to unpack, inventory supplies and begin seeing patients.

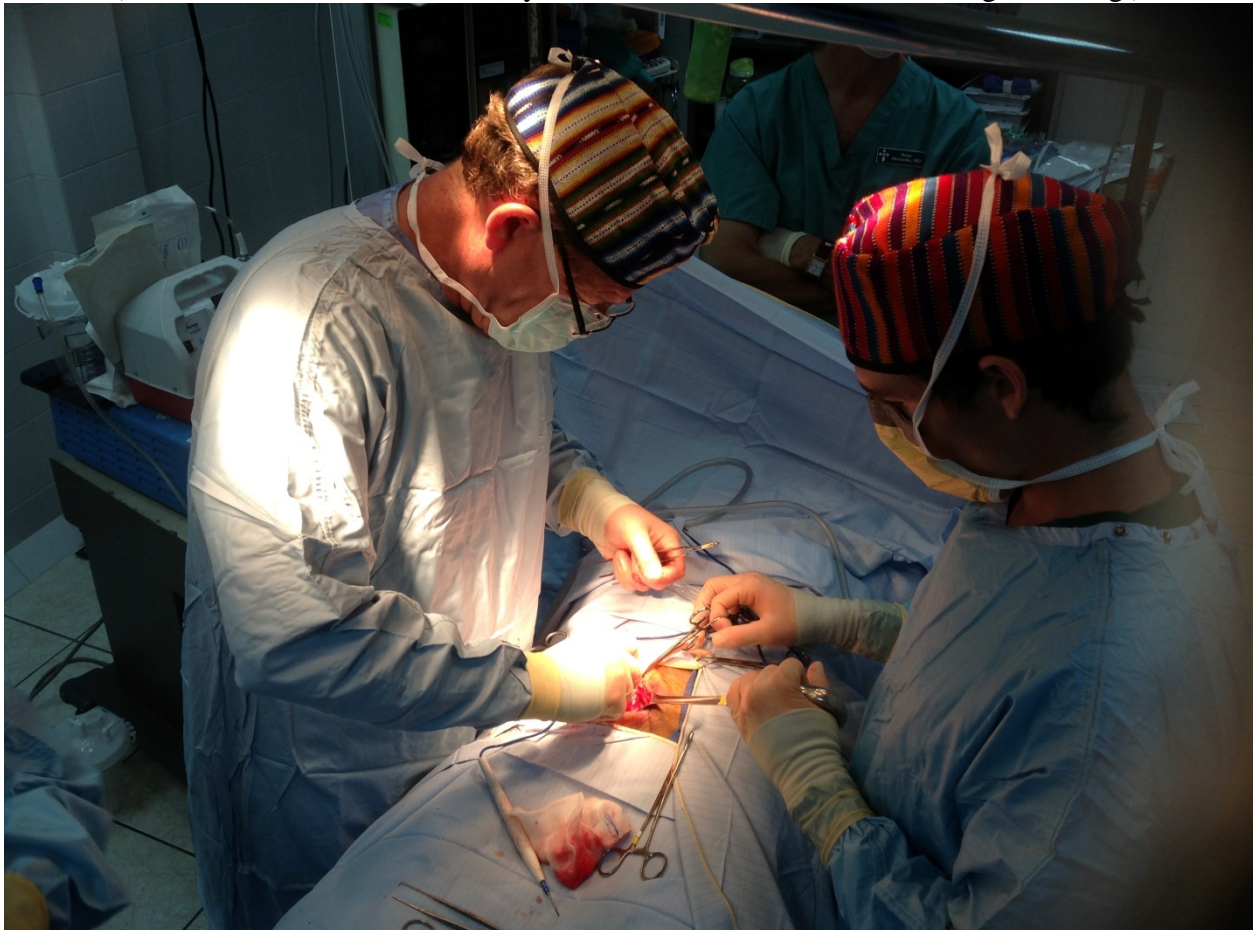
Sunday, June 2: Tradition continued with our Sunday schedule, breakfast was served at 8:00 instead of 7:00, and we had a leisure morning before worshipping with the Montellano church family. We completed eleven cases that day and one patient encountered difficulty and required three units of blood, so we worked late into the evening to get her stabilized. It was following this trip in 2012 that we began researching the possibility of scheduling blood donors on Sunday afternoon instead of responding to a crisis situation before seeking donors. As you can tell, it was a good thing as we used all three donors available Sunday afternoon and turned around on Monday and scheduled three more from our team. (The Monday units were not used and were later donated to a local hospital.)

Monday, June 3: To say this was a full day is an understatement. Four colo/rectal cases, nine general cases and six GYN...and that was after we moved multiple patients who were scheduled, to the next day. Any time we are able to complete six GYN cases in a single room, you know we have veterans like Dr. Ben Doke. It is uncommon for us to have a colo/rectal surgeon on a team, but Dr. Kirby Sweitzer returned for his first trip since 2011 and we had several patients scheduled for him. We experienced some challenges with the necessary positioning for these patients and rookie anesthesiologist, Dr. David Crasto took great care and caution...especially with the children. This resulted in long days and fewer patients coming out of OR 2, yet the care they received is seldom available and we are grateful we were able to improve a few lives and witness them praising God.

The waiting room was full of anxious patients and parents. The long wait was getting difficult for some of the children awaiting surgery, but caregivers Aimee Greeter and Katie Alexander saw the need and pulled out puzzles, books and games, sat down on the floor and entertained not only the children, but everyone in the room. Helpers who take initiative are such a blessing!

Two hard days and another on the horizon meant Monday was a good day to bring out the ice cream after our devotional. Additionally, we got to celebrate the dual birthdays of Dr. Ben Doke and Rosario Poncio.

(Dr. Charles Gross with second year medical student, Nick Freidberg, assisting.)



Tuesday, June 4: Twenty-two cases were completed on Tuesday, six more GYN, one colo/rectal and fifteen general surgeries. Six of our MET students were with us this week and took turns, two at a time rotating through the OR rooms. Second year HTI surgeon, Dr. Charles Gross, quickly became a favorite for the MET students and others interested in the healthcare field. GYN and colo/rectal surgery held a little less allure than general surgery, most often a hernia repair procedure.

Bode Teague served as our trip chaplain for the week and provided encourage words at every turn. In addition to our evening devotionals, Bode quickly settled into a role of calming patients and parents before surgery, checking on children while they were in surgery and rushing out of the OR to provide parents with regular updates. Bode is a former children's minister and currently serves as principle at Harding Academy Elementary, thus clearly has a special heart for children.

Following our Tuesday evening devotional, Bode led those in attendance down to the recovery area where we sang hymns to our patients and each of sought out a patient to hold or touch during a time of prayer. We would do this on Wednesday night also and those moments were the highlights for many on our team.

Wednesday, June 5: Our GYN room yet again turned out six cases, thanks to Drs. Erica Barrette and Brady Locke who teamed up with Dr. Ben Doke. Our other two rooms were strictly general cases that day, one hernia after the other...fifteen for the day with a few being bilateral. Dr. Doke commented that all of those long hours in medical school paid off and he was sure glad he wasn't a nurse. *That comment was directed to his lovely wife and RN, Leslie, who still had to monitor his patient for at least two hours once the last one came or of surgery.*

The nursing staff assigned to the recovery/hospital area had one disadvantage to the OR staff - no air conditioning! It is rainy season in Guatemala and most afternoons got pretty steamy before the rain fell. However, there was a greater advantage to working in the hospital area; the interaction with the patients is precious! Many on the team were reliant on Jeremy and Sara to translate to the patients, but soon they realized that a touch, some "body language" and a caring spirit went a long way to transcend the language barrier. The nursing staff usually were the recipients of grateful hugs and loving appreciation as patients packed up to go home with lives forever changed.

Twenty-two GYN cases for the week and our GYN room even tackled a general case to help us get finished on Wednesday. Going into Thursday, we had already cared for sixty-three patients...eight more to go on Thursday.

Thursday, June 6:

Eight cases were on tap for Thursday and we were trying to get done by noon so several on our team could make a trip to San Lucas Toliman and dine on the shore of Lake Atitlan. Dr. Brady Locke was down for the count with a fever and Dr. Barrette went with the early group to the lake. Drs. Gross and Sweitzer bounced from room to room with Dr. Doke following behind them close after surgery. Shortly after noon, all surgeries were complete...eighty in total. The early group returned from the lake around 1:00 PM, the second group around 6:00 PM and just in time for the traditional meal of fried chicken and fresh cut French fries.

(Trip chaplain, Bode Teague, with daughter and future nurse, McKenzie.)



All of our patients were discharged on Friday, every team member made it home safely and we are convinced that we honored God.

