

HEALTH TALENTS INTERNATIONAL
Guatemala Gen/Gyn Surgery Clinic
January 12-19, 2008

Participants: Gen Surgeons Drs. Ed Grogan, Danny Minor, and Mike Trimble; Gyn Surgeons Drs. Judi Jehle and Tommy Hatchett; Anesthesia Drs. Kendle Yates and Lawrence Freund and CRNA Kevin Burns; R-4 Gyn Resident Erin Steidl; R-2 Family Practice Resident Dr. Kim Williams; 4th year med students Matt Cope (and wife Jenna and baby Reese) and Zack Self; PA Nicole Reese; Nurses Karen Bradley, Leah Bradshaw, Barb Burg, Nancy Carlisle, Betty Dickerson, Joan Helms, Kelly Smith, Bonnie Spink, Sue Stowe, Sue Wihnyk, Student nurse Haley Rossman; Chaplain Bob Randolph; Translators Sue Gaytan and Julie Wheatley; Sterilization Leslie Minor, Boyce Helms, and Eric Mount; Nurses' Aides Jeanne Burch, Kara Minor, Lindsay Bradley; Maintenance Sam Yaws; Team Leader Marie Agee.

The trip started off with disappointment. Fourteen bags didn't show up in Guatemala, and 13 of them belonged to the Oklahoma group! It was Tuesday before they made their way to the clinic. We finally set out for Clinica Ezell only to come upon not one, but two wrecks on the highway that caused it to take us five hours to travel to Montellano! We were all too ready to get off the bus when we finally did arrive.

After unpacking the luggage filled with supplies, we began to settle in. The docs began operating after lunch on Sunday, and by the end of the day had operated on six patients. One of our first patients was 4-yr-old Julio, who was in for hernia repair. Later in the day he began running a fever so the doctors wanted him to spend the night. Most children go home the same day.

Monday was a killer day with seventeen cases in all. That didn't count the one gyn case that we moved to Tuesday, where we already had nine cases scheduled.

One of the new things this trip was the creation of an immediate post-op ward for surgical patients. The first four spaces of the ward were cleared of beds to make room for four gurneys. When patients recovered from surgery sufficiently, they were moved to a bed. This allowed one nurse to devote her whole attention to the patients as they recovered. This worked so well throughout the week that it will become standard procedure.

Sue Gaytan spent her time translating in pre-surgery exams and pre-op. She told of a woman who, upon being told that she would have surgery the next day, fell to her knees sobbing and praying! The doctor thought that she was mad at him for telling her she needed surgery, but she said, "No!" She said that hers were tears of joy!" She went on to say that she'd been to a Guatemalan doctor for evaluation but couldn't afford the Q8,000 fee he wanted to operate. Since she desperately needed surgery, she went away in despair. On this day she was very happy to learn that she would get the help she needed.

On Tuesday little Julio was still running a fever and seemed lethargic. The docs were convinced by now that he had a virus of some sort. Julio's mother was Mayan and much older than normal for someone with such a young child. We learned that the mother had never had any children of her own, but when an unmarried niece had given birth to Julio, the niece offered Julio to her.

She was very happy and fulfilled to have him, but soon afterward, her husband left her, so now Julio is all she has. Being an older single mother with a young child is not a good position to be in in Guatemala.

Things were still going really well by Wednesday. By the end of this day, twenty patients had received surgical care. Julio was better but was still running a slight fever. Dr. Jehle, a veteran of many years of these clinics, observed that the gynecological patients seemed to present in a more severe manner than before. There didn't seem to be very many simple cases any longer, she said.

The joy of the week was the new cell phone tower that was built in our backyard! It makes our telephone service incredible—and the connection was so clear! We can now use the cell phone anywhere on campus, rather than only down at the bridge standing on one leg facing east! It's wonderful to be so connected...even though we are so far away.

There was a little scare in the patient ward on Wednesday night when a patient had blood pressure problems. She finally settled down after a few hours of constant care.

On Thursday little Julio and his mom finally went home! Yea! He and his mom were so happy...and he looked really healthy.

Our chaplain for the week was Dr. Bob Randolph, who is a Church of Christ minister who is the newly appointed chaplain for MIT. He offered thoughtful, insightful devotionals throughout the week and helped us see familiar stories with new eyes. What will stick with me forever is his observation about why the Magi “went home a different way” upon seeing the baby Jesus. It seems clear that something happened during that meeting that changed them...as every meeting with Jesus does.

By the end of the week, the surgeons had operated on 73 patients, performing a total of 93 procedures. All the patients did well, and once again, we praise God for his faithfulness.



