

HEALTH TALENTS INTERNATIONAL
Nicaragua Trip Report
January 28-February 3, 2016

Team Members: Alan Boyd, MD; Cyrilyn Walters, MD; Sharon Wright, RNP; Marilyn Cooper- Jenkins, DDS; Maegan Rogers, RPh; Chaplain Adam Kaufhold; Translator Steve Fox; Compassionate Caregivers: Suzi Fox, Ann Grantham, Charles Jarrett, Amy Lee, Grace McIntyre, Sharon Midgett, Jana Moss, Claire Owens, Connie Pyles, Gary Tabor, Robert Taylor and Donna Voigt; Team Leader Marie Agee.

Clinic Day 1 – Nuevo Horizonte (locally known as Plywood because of the prevalence of government-built house there that are made from plywood)

As has become typical, this was the site of our first clinic. The preacher, Elvis Cruz, welcomed us with great sincerity and indicated with a wave of his hand that all was ready for us. The church had assembled a sufficient number of table and chairs, had advertised the clinic well in advance and distributed patient numbers so a large crowd of patients was ready and waiting, and had organized the needed volunteers to assist with the clinic. Elvis also proudly showed off the new well that was adjacent to the clinic...that served the new baptistery they had built at the eastern outside end of their modest building. Last year's medical team had gifted them with funds to dig the much needed water source.

We began each clinic day with a devotional in Spanish and English and by spraying ourselves with bug spray for protection against the Zika virus and other scourges that mosquitos carry.

The clinic day seemed to go by very quickly, and except for a diabetic with a blood sugar of more than 600, we fortunately did not see any extreme medical cases that are so heart wrenching. By the time we saw the last patient, the total number of individuals seen and treated was 302.

At the devo back at the hotel, Chaplain Adam Kaufhold, minister of the Aspen Grove Christian Church in Franklin, Tennessee, challenged our team to follow the balanced pattern of Jesus' life: work, rest, and prayer. The first night he reviewed the work that Jesus did but predicted that most of us would find the next evening's topic, "rest," to be the most challenging of the three.

Clinic Day 2 – Tipitapa Centro

Last year our team responded to a fervent request for a clinic from a tiny village called La Villa. It was clear when we arrived that the small church there had done what they could to provide an adequate facility for the medical and dental clinic. We made it work, despite the fact that much of the clinic was in the blazing sun and the dental clinic was only about 8'x10.' Without our urging, they themselves realized it was not adequate, so they contacted church leaders from another community further down the road that was still within walking distance for the people of La Villa. The elders at Tipitapa Centro readily agreed to host the clinic, and their building proved to be an excellent choice. It was spacious and airy, and the sheet dividers provided the privacy the caregivers needed when seeing patients. An additional bonus was that a few of the preachers and elders spoke some English, which made it possible for team members to communicate with them and learn more of their church and the area.

The pharmacy ran smoothly despite the fact that at the last minute our veteran pharmacist, Larry Owens, had to drop out because of work-related issues. Then Tony McBride, our substitute for Larry, developed a serious medical issue two days *after* he had agreed to go. That put Maegan Rogers in charge, and she had only come for the first time the previous year. With the help of Jennifer, a Nicaraguan nursing student, retired physician Charles Jarrett and a cadre of volunteers, she handled it all with grace and patience (no pun intended) and all went well.

Again, the patient load was fairly typical with no extreme cases. By the end of the day, the team had been the hands and feet of Jesus for 452 souls, with this being our heaviest dental day. A real bright spot of the day was the preacher at La Villa came bearing photographs of La Villa from the past year. He particularly pointed out a man who appeared in several of the photos as the person who had been baptized during last year's clinic. He is now a faithful servant of the Lord at La Villa.

Sunday: A Day of Rest

Since we no longer conduct a clinic at the Rene Polanco Iglesia de Cristo, we especially enjoy attending worship there. In addition to praising God together (juntos), it gives us a chance to renew acquaintances with the many people we've known through the years. Jose Garcia was especially pleased to have us because he wanted us to be a part of the dedication ceremony for their newly remodeled children's wing. The Waterview Church of Christ in Richardson, Texas, partnered with them in this effort, so Grace McIntyre and Robert Taylor cut the ribbon in celebration. The church's breakfast program now provides breakfast to several hundred children during the course of a month, and many of their parents have been introduced to the Lord and the church because of it.

After lunch and a brief ride down to Lake Nicaragua, Nicaragua's largest lake. It is home to bull sharks, highly unusual for a fresh water lake. It was very beautiful...but a baseball game was calling us, so we drove back to Managua in time to attend the Hispanic World Series. The Nicaragua Giants were playing the national team from Columbia. Nicaragua won handily. It was a fun experience but not one we are likely to repeat!

Clinic Day 3 – Cofradia

The Cofradia Iglesia de Cristo has become one of our regular clinic sites. We saw Jimena again, and she looked like a normal, healthy two-year-old. That is exciting because she was born with Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia, which occurs when the adrenal glands do not function properly. A member of last year's team provided a year's worth of the medication she needs to take twice a day to survive. The Waterview Church of Christ committed to provide it for her next year.

We had a delightful patient in the form of a 99-yr-old woman. She exemplified joy itself with her smiling, laughing and giving me a big kiss when she told me goodbye! I never heard why she came to see a doctor, but my guess is that it couldn't have been very serious because she seemed way too happy and healthy.

Steve and Suzi Fox visited the nearby home of a lovely young woman who had suffered a severe stroke at the grand old age of 13. They were excited to find her home with her family, so they brought her back to the clinic with them so she could see the rest of the team. She is now 19 years old, and although still suffering some paralysis, is making the best of the skills she has.

An older woman (late 60's) presented herself to our nurse practitioner, Sharon Wright, with a fist-sized lump on her left jaw line. She said she had had it for two years. Without any diagnostic testing except for a 3-month-old sonogram report that she had, the general consensus between Sharon, Marilyn the dentist, and a couple of the physicians, was that it was likely a cystic tumor (an enlargement of the maxillary or submandibular salivary gland...or both). They referred her back to the government health clinic for further testing to determine whether or not it could be malignant.

Total number of people treated this day was 356.

Clinic Day 4 – Jose Dolores de Estrada

The clinic here proved to be our busiest clinic day ever...with 514 patients in one day! It included a couple of diabetic patients with dangerously high readings. One elderly woman's reading was so high that we sent out for insulin and injected her immediately and asked her to spend the next few hours with us so we could monitor her. She waited, had lunch, then waited some more. By the time the doctor told her she could leave, her glucose level was down to less than 300. She told the doctor that she was on insulin regularly, but she had not taken it that day and clearly did not understand the importance of it. Likewise, a male patient showed up after we had stopped accepting patients and said he had just come from work so he hadn't been able to get there earlier. He said he was concerned about his diabetes, and upon checking his glucose level, we found it to be 385. The doctor adjusted the medication level he took and sent him on his way. He was very grateful.

Another patient who also begged to come in late in the day was an elderly woman accompanied by her daughter. She wanted to see the dermatologist because her hair was suddenly falling out. Upon Dr. Alan Boyd's questioning, he learned that she had been experiencing a great deal of family stress lately. Without finding any other reason for her hair loss, he attributed it to the stress.

It was with a tired sadness that we ended our last clinic day, but we took comfort in the fact that 1,624 people had felt the compassion of Jesus when they were treated at our clinics. Adam consoled us in our final devo of the week that if we found our ankles swollen from standing all day in clinic, it simply meant that our hearts were overflowing! Good thought to remember. God is good...and we are exceedingly grateful for his love and protection for us and our patients during the week. Keep reading to see some photos of the week.



Adam Kaufhold with local preachers at Nuevo Horizonte



Tipitapa Centro church building



Dr. Alan Boyd and Adam Kaufhold with two Tipitapa church leaders



White heron on Lake Nicaragua



An evening at the Nicaragua ball park



Lovely 99-year-old lady...who makes everyone around her happy!



Patients "patiently" awaiting their turn at the pharmacy window.



Lady with a cystic tumor



Line of waiting patients at the Jose Dolores church



Steve (r) and Suzie (l) Fox at the home of their young friend.



2016 Nicaragua Mobile Medical Team...a formidable bunch!