

HEALTH TALENTS INTERNATIONAL
Nicaragua Mobile Medical Clinic
January 26 – February 1, 2017

Team Participants: Physicians Dr. Alan Boyd, Dr. Cyrilyn Walters, Dr. David Weed; Dentist Dr. Marylin Cooper-Jenkins, Lisa Gawle, RN, Pharmacists Maegan Rogers and Don Sullivan, Chaplain/Translator Roger McCown; Translator Steve Fox; Compassionate Caregivers Suzi Fox, Ann Grantham, Carole & Tony McBride, Sharon Midgett, Claire Owens, Connie Pyles, Gary Tabor, Robert Taylor and Donna Voigt; Team leader Marie Agee.

Aided by a multitude of Christians from the churches we visited, this team had yet another successful mobile medical clinic trip to Nicaragua. Our first was in 1994, followed by annual visits every year since. This year marks trip number 23. This year we hosted mobile medical/dental/optometry/physical therapy clinics in the following places: Nuevo Horizonte, Rene Polanco, Cofradia and Tipitapa Centro.

Nuevo Horizonte Iglesia de Cristo: Upon arrival we were met by the preacher, Elvis Cruz, who was a mere shadow of his former self, having lost a substantial amount of weight because of newly diagnosed diabetes. He assured us that he was now stable and doing well.

A large crowd of patients was awaiting us, and after a couple of songs and a prayer blessing, the day began. This year we were fortunate to not have been met with any heart wrenching cases like we have in the past. There were bad cases of diabetes, high blood pressure, scabies, and such that can make your life pretty miserable but not that were immediately life threatening. Last year we treated 302 patients at this location...this year 339. Included were 25 dental patients (33 extractions), 100 eyeglass patients, and 9 physical therapy patients.

Rene Polanco Iglesia de Cristo: We had been coming to Rene Polanco every year until two years ago, so it was good to return. Unlike our other clinics, Rene Polanco is located within Managua itself. This church has a small medical clinic open a few hours each week (which is why we did not feel the need to come here every year). It was surprising then that this was our largest clinic of the week. We treated 462 patients by the end of the day.

Because we had such a history with Rene Polanco, many of us have developed relationships with some of its members. Guadalupe is one of those. I have written about her in the past because she is impossible not to notice. She has an emotional condition that has a fancy name but manifests itself by what I have always called "polka dots" all over her arms and legs, spots that she has picked at so often they have become like dark, hard warts. Living with such a thing will obviously impact how you feel about yourself and it clearly impacted Guadalupe...and not in a good way. As she slinked among the crowd at the church she gave the appearance of that of a whipped dog, hoping no one would notice her. She seemed unable to make eye contact with anyone, even for a moment. Every year, however, she appeared for her annual visit with our team dermatologist, Dr. Alan Boyd. In his kind and gentle way, Dr. Boyd talked with her, examined her spots, and after every visit prescribed treatment. Over time she began to feel his respect for her as a human being, and ever so slowly began to respond.

She made her living mostly by begging in the streets, but about two years ago Jose Garcia offered her a part time job as a cleaning lady with the church's children's breakfast program, sponsored by the Waterview Church of Christ in Richardson, Texas. She eagerly accepted the job offer, but realized with a start that with it came the expectation that she would have to actually show up for work at required

times. When she begged for a living, she was without restraint, so she struggled with making the work commitment. Jose talked with her many times and explained again and again about the benefits of regular employment, not the least of which was a social security type income and free health care once she became too old to work. Sometime during the past year, she became convinced and has since become a model employee, having given up begging all together.

The difference this has made in her attitude about herself is remarkable! Her stance is more erect, her eye contact more consistent, and she even spent some of her hard earned money to give each team member a small gift! Those of us who have known her for the past 23 years stand amazed at the changes in her. This is only one example of how one doctor made a difference in the life of one of his patients and it did not directly involve medicine. It was simply the result of the doctor responding in love to God's call to go into all the world and use his talents for God's glory. In doing so, he ran headlong into someone who needed to believe she was worth something. And in God's kingdom, she is worth a million bucks!

Guadalupe was only one of the patients we treated here. We also had a couple of patients with extremely high blood pressure, and a young girl who experienced an epileptic seizure during the morning. Gary Tabor and one of the Nicaraguans escorted her home afterward. We treated 462 people here, and that number includes 29 dental patients (30 extractions) and 12 physical therapy patients.

Cofradia: This has been one of our regular clinic sites for the past few years. Their building is a large domed-shaped building that serves our needs well. We started the day by witnessing the baptism of a young woman. That was a good way to begin the day.

The most anxiety producing case here was Dr. David Weed's patient, a child about 3 years old, who began having an asthma attack. We had no medicine on hand to treat an asthma attack, but Roger McCown did. He donated his personal inhaler while someone went out to the small local pharmacies with the hope of finding one. They didn't find any inhalers, but wonder of wonders, they were able to purchase a nebulizer and the medication to use in it! God is good.

By the end of the day, we had treated 316 patients, including 11 dental patients (10 extractions) and 97 eyeglass patients.

Tipitapa Centro: This church is only about 7 years old, and its building is built on the site of an old garbage dump. One of the church leaders told me it took months to clear up the site enough to build the spacious, though only partly finished building they have now. This was only our second visit here, but it was apparent that a great deal of preparation had taken place in advance of our visit. The signs denoting each doctor's "office," the pharmacy, physical therapy and optometry were very large, colorful and in many cases 3-dimensional. Setting up did not take long, but everyone did take a moment to have their pictures taken by their lovely signs!

Clinic here was busy from start to finish. The pharmacy at times was overwhelmed with patients patiently (no pun intended) waiting in line to get their prescriptions filled. There were at least 8-10 people working in the pharmacy, counting translators, and it took each and every one of them to stay on track. They worked hard all day long and under pressure! Pharmacists Maegan and Don, and capable "pharmacy techs" Tony, Claire, Sharon, Carole, Suzi and Connie deserve an extra plate of rice and beans!



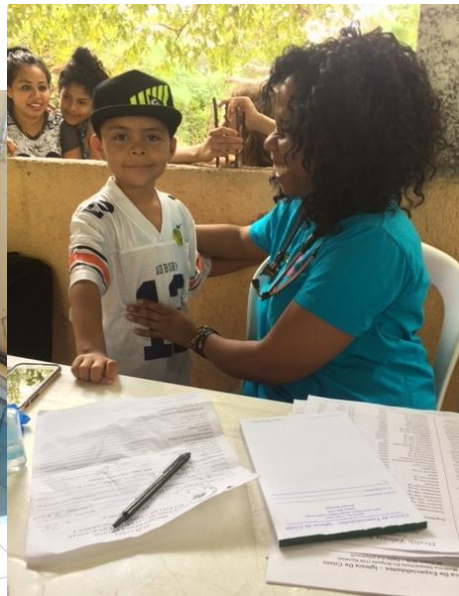
Elvis Cruz (c) conducting devo at Nuevo Horizonte



Patients awaiting their turn at Nuevo Horizonte



Ernesto conducting a baptism at Rene Polanco



Dr. Cyrilyn Walters & little Auburn fan



Baptism at Cofradia



Clinic at Tipitapa Centro



Dr. Weed & Lisa Gawle looking for lice??

Chaplain Roger McCown translating for Dr. Alan Boyd

Dental team in Tipitapa Centro



Team Nica 2017: (Back row) Dr. Alan Boyd, Maegan Rogers, Roger McCown, Gary Tabor, Dr. David Weed, Tony McBride, Dr. Cyrilyn Walters, Don Sullivan, Lisa Gawle, Steve Fox. (Front row) Marie Agee, Sharon Midgett, Carole McBride, Dr. Marylin Cooper-Jenkins, Claire Owens, Connie Pyles, Donna Voigt, Ann Grantham, and Suzi Fox. Missing is Robert Taylor.

Overall, it was once again a very satisfying clinic, made all the more meaningful by Roger McCown's thoughtful devotionals each evening. He reviewed several familiar passages in the first few chapters of John and asked probing questions to make us see with different eyes the stories we know so well. That and his willingness to translate all day long made him a valuable addition to the team.

Thanks to all of you who kept us in your minds and hearts while we were gone. We felt your presence and were grateful for it. Mostly, we are grateful to God for giving us yet one more opportunity to serve Him and His creation (all 1,516 of them) in such a special way.