

HEALTH TALENTS INTERNATIONAL
Gyn & Plastics Surgery Clinic
February 4-11, 2012

10th ANNIVERSARY OF CLINICAL EZELL

Trip Report – by Marie Agee

Participants: Gyns...Drs. Mark Kellum, Jud Allen, Rusty Ethridge, and Roy Kellum; Plastic Surgeons... Drs. Dwayne Fulks, Mike Hueneke, and Philip Strawther; Cardiologist Dr. Quinton Dickerson, Jr.; Pediatrician Dr. Katy Farrell; Anesthesia...Dr. Jeff Bennie; CRNAs Tamera Cameron and Yvette Riker; RNs...Nancy Bennie, Glenn Berkey, Neva Berkey, Catherine Broome, Alice Bush, Hannah Buzhardt, Lisa Cantrell, Ann Cross, Laura Driggers, Val Ethridge, Jan Harper, Joy Kellum, Lindsey Leder, Angie Martin, Sarah McKay, Judy McRay, Christine Newman, Linda Osborn, Brenda Robinson, Marlene Sparkman, Kate Totty, and Misty Vance; Harding Nursing Students Audrianna Copeland, Andrea Knappe and Valerie Porter; Compassionate Caregivers Rita Benson, Ann Dickerson, Carol Mondich, Susan Kellum, John Land, Nancy Land, Tony McKay, and Marjorie Strawther; Med Student Shari Vance; Sterilization Alfred Anderson, Dee Anderson, and Doyle Robinson; Trip Chaplains Charles Bates and Rob McRay; HTI Team Leader Rick Harper; Team Leader Asst Marie Agee.

Not a good way to start a trip...26 bags did not make it. Bad weather and short connections were the cause. Continental assured us that they would get them to us the next day, so we went on our way to Clinica Ezell. What bags did arrive were unpacked, and the physicians began seeing the patients that had arrived for possible surgery the next day. It turned out to be Monday before we got our bags, but we finally did.

Sunday morning we went to worship across the street from the clinic. Dr. David Lux had the message for the day, and even those who couldn't speak Spanish caught that he mentioned President Obama during the sermon. His message had to do with faith in God, not in this world. He said that many people in Guatemala would be thrilled if President Obama adopted their child because they knew then that the child would be blessed with a good life. As Christians, however, our concern shouldn't be about material things but rather about living our lives to honor Him.

After the standard medical orientation and lunch, the surgeries began. Since it was a "plastics" week, there were many babies on hand, some of whom had been there before and were ready for their follow-up surgeries. They are always such a joy to have! The babies included Hector (10 mos old), Christian (7 mos), Hefer (14 mos), Limney (14 mos), and Emilie (8 mos). Sheri Kretschmar had driven Hector and Hefer and their moms down from the Chichi area. It was so good to see Sheri again.

One of the babies actually had two deformities. A little 14-month-old baby girl named Limney not only had a cleft palate but both her little hands were missing the first two fingers. In medical circles it is called the "claw" hand. It didn't seem to stop her though! She was smiling at everyone and waving bye bye as they moved through the ward.

The first day of surgery ended at a decent hour. I believe the total number for the day was nine. After supper we had a devotional and sharing session so we could get to know one another better. The core

of the February team has worked together for several years, but there are always a few new people. They don't stay "new" for long, however! This team adopts everyone who comes wanting to serve! Two of the nurses were former Harding University students, Laura Driggers and Hannah Buzhardt, who are now full-fledged nurses. I think this was their third time to participate. There were three current Harding nursing students (Audrianna, Andrea and Valerie), and we hope they will follow the same pattern of participating in HTI clinics once they graduate and begin their nursing careers.

At the close of every day the doctors do pre-op exams of the patients scheduled for the following day. Some of the patients are judged not to be good candidates for surgery for whatever reason. Sometimes their conditions aren't serious enough for surgery. Sadly, sometimes their opportunity for surgery comes too late. Such was the case with a 39-year-old woman who was discovered to have a very widespread cancer that was far beyond the reach of surgery. The woman has three children, so it was especially hard on the medical team to have to tell her that. They called Dr. Walter Sierra in to talk and pray with her. He told her that she needed to go to the cancer institute in Guatemala City for what treatment they could give her, but the reality is that she likely won't go. There is such a sense of resignation among the people due to their difficult lives that they seemingly just give up.

We had two other cancer cases during the week. One was a 50-something woman whose malignancy wasn't discovered until she was undergoing surgery. It had spread, but not nearly so much as the woman mentioned above. The third case was a plastics case. An elderly woman had a basal cell carcinoma on her nose that Dr. Strawther removed.

One of the most touching things to see here is patients praying for other patients. One of the nurses told me that one patient expressed worry about her surgery the following day, and the next thing she knew some of the other women, who did not appear to even know this woman, got up out of their beds to go over to her and pray with her. The cultural connection between physical and spiritual health is very strong here.

While the surgeries were going on, Dr. Quinton Dickerson and Dr. Katy Farrell went on mobile clinics with Dr. Walter and Dr. David. Many of the cases were rather commonplace, but Dr. Farrell did see a woman who had one hand much smaller than the other due to constriction by the placenta in utero. It wasn't causing her a problem, however.

Dr. Dickerson identified a case of severe malnutrition in a 16-yr-old girl who was the size of a 10-yr-old. She and her mother were basically homeless and slept wherever they could. The girl told nurse Alice Bush, who was interpreting, that she only ate an egg or beans every three days or so. The rest of the time she just had tortillas or something. A former Clinica Ezell patient, who was a member of the Church of Christ, and her 13-yr-old daughter happened up about that time, and the physical difference between the two daughters was striking. Alice captured it in a photo I've included below. Dr. Walter signed the 16-yr-old up in his severe malnutrition program, and Quinton and Alice proceeded to encourage the church member to get involved in the life of the other woman and her daughter. Both were excited to have a part in encouraging the local church to care for people like this.

The day that Quinton and Alice went to San Basilio was exciting as well as Feliciano was baptized in the river that day! Evangelism Coordinator Baldemar Ruiz and his two apprentices participate in the mobile clinics and work with local churches. One of the apprentices performed the baptism.

On Wednesday evening, *Voces Accapella*, a Quiche gospel group, performed for the team. Hearing familiar hymns sung in Quiche and Spanish was pretty special. Their final number was in English!

The only thing that marred an otherwise perfect week was that the electrical current was interrupted at the main trunk line on Tuesday, so the power company sent someone out to repair it. When it happened, one surgery had just been completed and another about to start. In fact, anesthesiologist Dr. Jeff Bennie had his needle in position to inject the patient when the lights when out. He decided that it probably wasn't a good idea to try to continue in the dark! The third operating room had a patient still on the table, however. People began running into the room bearing flashlights that they held up until we could get the emergency generator started! Fortunately, it all ended well and the lights eventually came back on.

I could go on and on, but you get the idea. It was a great week, ending with 59 patients having received surgical care. All did very well, so we left Friday morning giving thanks to God for being with us and our patients during the week. To God be the Glory!

Hector – before and after surgery





Little Limney and her mother



Feliciano at his "burial" with Christ



The malnourished 16-yr-old is 2nd from the left; the 13-yr-old on far right.



February 2012 Gyn/Plastics Surgery Team