

Health Talents International

September 5-12, 2015

Genera/GYN/Urology Surgical Mission

Trip Participants: General Surgeon: Richard Hwang; Pediatric Urologist: Gerald Jerkins, Lindsey Hartsell; OB/GYN: Cheryl Onwuchuruba, Bob Elder, Lisa Buckingham, Angela Yates; Anesthesia providers: Al Jones, Rachel Turner, Dave Ratliff, Jeremy Taylor; Ultrasound Tech: Annabelle Folloso; OR staff: Glen McGehee, Leslie Smith, Richard Yates, Matthew Yates, Julie Williams, Mike Caldwell; Recovery Room Nurses: Kate Bridges, Barbara Burg, Lauren Moore, Linda Osborne, Joslyn Smith, Fran Sutton, Henry Beseda, Amy Smith, Katie Welch; Translators: Kathy Buckingham, Amy Class, Dianne Martin, Adolfo Obregón, Rita Sills, Abby Stanley; Handy Men: Gary Tabor, Josh Anderson; Caregivers: Ernest King, Mattie McGehee, Sandra Robinson, Elisa Smith, Tanya Smith, Neta West; Sterilization: John Buckingham, Guy Martin, Cary Sills; Intern: Samantha Adcock; Chaplain: Rick Harper; HTI Team Leader: Julie Obregón

On our way in to Guatemala we had several different flight schedules but thankfully all flights were on time and everyone but Henry made it safely to Guatemala on time. Henry had issues at the airport departing but made it to Guatemala and joined the rest of the team on Sunday morning after driving down to Montellano with Dr. Walter.

When the team arrived in Montellano there were patients waiting to be screened and supplies needing to be unpacked and inventoried. The team divided up and started seeing patients and unpacking while those new to Health Talents were given tours and introduced to Clinica Ezell. Later that evening we had some time of orientation and quickly headed off to bed.



We awoke to birds singing and a beautiful sunny day. The local Church of Christ welcomed us as we joined their service. Carlos Baltodano preached the sermon in both Spanish and English and Glenn did us the favor of leading some songs in English. That afternoon we started surgeries and were off to a bit of a rocky start when our anesthesia machines decided they did not want to cooperate. Thankfully our back up machines were working and helped us to iron out that little snag. Surgeries went smoothly with no complications and that evening Rick gave us our first devotional thought of the week.

The next day we had a full schedule of cases for the OR and our nurses were already starting to fill up the recovery ward with sweet Guatemalan patients. Thankfully God was watching over us and the anesthesia machines were working just fine. Lauren and Henry did a wonderful job recovering patients in immediate post op. Having ICU experienced RN's on our teams is a big help and a great comfort to the surgeons and anesthesia providers but mostly to the patients!

Surgeries went a little late into the evening which kept our nurses in recovery busy most of the evening. Thankfully the patients settled in for a night of rest and recovery and the night shift nurses Linda and Joslyn had a full but not overly stress filled night shift. The night passed by quickly with the help of Sandra and Amy serving as caregiver and translator.

Tuesday morning the team woke up in good spirits. Rick had a special role on this team serving as chaplain, a deviation from his typical spot in the sterilization room. Each morning he gave the team some food for thought to carry with us throughout the day. In the evenings he tied in the day's thought with the evening devotional. He led our hearts and minds to consider what it means to be a pleasing aroma to God as we served his Kingdom throughout the week. Rick went out to mobile medical clinics each day with Drs. Walter, Nehemias and Patricia. It had been many years since Rick had the opportunity to spend time with HTI's regular medical providers at the village clinics so he was happy to hit the road each day with these teams. On Wednesday while in La Campesina with Dr. Patricia, Rick was able to attend a special home visit to a little girl named Maria. Dr. Patricia calls Maria her star patient because she has been treating her for some time now and has grown accustomed to seeing thirteen year old Maria at her clinic each week. This sweet child has dermatitis and a sensitivity to the sun which causes her to have rashes, sores and irritated skin any time she is directly exposed to sunlight. After meeting Maria, Rick came back to Clinica Ezell and told the group about her at our devotional time. Rick called her Heartbreak Maria, she earned this name because when Dr. Patricia first treated her, she asked for a hug prior to sending her to our pharmacy station. Perhaps you are asking yourself right now why a hug would earn a child the name of Heartbreak Maria, well it is because when Dr. Patricia first went to hug her, Maria didn't seem to know what to do. After standing there awkwardly for a moment she told Dr. Patricia, "my mother has never approached me for a hug." In her own family Maria is an outcast with a mother who is embarrassed and disgusted by her condition. And so our hearts break for this little girl, weighing only 48 pounds and carrying a burden upon her shoulders no thirteen year old should ever have to carry.



Maria's story only begins with sorrow and sadness for as it says in Psalm 145:9 "The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made." and Maria is no exception! Perhaps Maria will never have a happy home or a loving mother but God has given her a new family, the HTI family. Dr. Patricia has treated Maria with compassion and medical care so that her skin is greatly improved and regularly protected from the damaging UV rays as she learns to receive hugs and acceptance. Maria was also added to our milk program which provides her with vitamin and protein fortified milk to help her gain weight and improve her health. There are many other ways in which we are able to help Maria but the most important thing we can do is to love her with Christ's love, to teach her about the truth of his resurrection and to invite her to be a part of his family. We will continue to serve Maria, to be Jesus' arms of love embracing this child of His.

On mission trips like this there are always special patients whose cases give us a little window into Heaven as we see God's hands at work. Another of these stories from this week is that of Dominga, a 25 year old woman with a vesico-vaginal fistula. For those of you who aren't medical this basically means that she had a hole in her bladder which caused her urine to leak out of her non-stop. To make the situation worse this hole was caused by a difficult child birth in which the infant did not survive. Dominga went to several hospitals asking for help to heal her so that she wouldn't be doomed to wear diapers for the rest of her life. She was turned away time and time again with nothing more than a catheter offered which was certainly not a good long term solution. Thankfully God heard the cry of her desperate heart and sent Dominga our way when we had not only an OB-GYN but also an Urologist on our surgical team. Bob and Gerald were able to develop an appropriate plan for Dominga and after a six hour surgery she was wheeled into the recovery room in stable condition. We couldn't help bring back her child but we were able to heal her body and touch her life with surgery, compassion and words of Christ. Dominga will be seen for follow up care in October by the next OB-GYN team at Clinica Ezell. We are honored that God has allowed us to experience yet another miracle of healing and are encouraged to know that Dominga will be able to live a normal life without this crippling disability.

The rest of our week went smoothly until the wee hours of Thursday morning when one of our patients in post op fainted and gave our night shift nurses quite a scare. Lauren was called to watch over the patient while Linda and Joslyn continued caring for the rest of the patients in the ward. Our fainting lady woke up and was able to be discharged the following day as planned.



Since this week was election week and there were concerns about transportation being interrupted we decided to forego the



trip to the lake on Thursday. Instead the team members enjoyed walking into the village, visiting the tourist shop and bouncing across the swinging bridge. Later that afternoon most of the group headed out for a little excursion to the cacao farm. For the first timers seeing the massive Ceiba tree was quite a shock! The group had fun visiting the sweet family at the farm and enjoyed tasting the cacao fruit before loading up and heading back to Clinica Ezell.

After a delicious dinner we gathered together for our final devotional time of sharing about the week. It was a special time for this team to remember Donna Pollat who was with the September team last year and has since passed away. And to celebrate the presence of Al Jones who was supposed to be on the trip last year but had to cancel because of a cancer diagnosis and treatment. We celebrated Al's recovery and our prayers continue to be with him as he goes in for follow up exams.

All together the team was able to offer life changing surgeries for 70 different patients, all the while giving the glory to God.

Written by Julie Obregon

