

Health Talents International
February 8-15, 2014
GYN/Plastic Surgery Trip

Trip Participants: **Plastic Surgeons:** Dwayne Fulks, Michael Hueneke, Phillip Strawther; **OBGYNs:** Jud Allen, Mark Kellum, Roy Kellum, JoJo Payne; **Pediatrician:** Katy Farrell; **PA:** Sean Driggers; **Anesthesia:** Jeff Bennie, Jon Bennie, Tamara Cameron, Karen Parrick; **4th Year Medical Student:** Laurie Bennie; **Pharmacy Intern:** Tyler Jeter; **Mission Intern:** Andrew Dickerson; **RNs:** Nancy Bennie, Hannah Buzhardt, Lisa Cantrell, Tracey Cherye, Ann Cross, Laura Driggers, Freda Fuller, Jan Harper, Scarlett Johnston, Joy Kellum, Nancy Morris, Beth O'Brien, Linda Osborne, Molly Vandivier; **EMT:** Samantha Tsuchiya; **Harding Nursing Students:** Enrique Cenicerros, Rachel James, Larissa Pinczuk; **Compassionate Caregivers:** Paula Allen, Rita Benson, Kali Edgeworth, Shelly Fulks, Skylar Fuller, Susan Kellum, Tessa Kulick, Susan Payne, Jan Reeder, Beau Stallings, Mikayla Stallings, Marjorie Strawther; **Sterilization:** Bob Fuller, Tyler Jeter, Cary Sills; **Translators:** Cynthia Allen, Drew Bennie, Rita Sills; **Chaplain:** Paavo Tucker; **Team Leaders:** Rick Harper and Dave Mellor

After several weeks of colder weather than normal, and more precipitation that was desired, the February faithful were more excited than normal to be heading to Guatemala, the land of "eternal spring." The icy weather only delayed four on our team from making the morning flight to Guatemala, but by Sunday morning, everyone was safely gathered at Clinica Ezell. Supplies had been inventoried, equipment readied for surgery and new team members were quickly assimilated into this veteran group.

Many of our patients on this trip had been seen the previous year, a few twice, with eight of them having received surgical care in August for cleft palate repair. As a result of their familiarity with Clinica Ezell, our team and the many expressions of love, these sweet patients become...and act like family. Osman, Amariyls, Angelisa, Anderson and others are the objects of non-stop attention, knowing full well that they have captured our hearts completely. Since so many of our cleft patients are under the age of two, their parents remain with them while they're with us and they too, become part of our family.

Following a leisurely breakfast on Sunday morning, our team trekked across the street for a time of worship with the Montellano church family. Carlos Baltodano, or Director of Coastal Operations, treated us to a bilingual lesson. *Or better described as an abbreviated summary in English of a lengthier sermon in Spanish.* Within ninety minutes of our worship time together coming to a close, we had completed our surgical orientation, eaten a quick bite of lunch and were off to the OR.

By the time our first three patients were on the OR tables and under anesthesia, tenderhearted RN, Rosario Poncio, had begun a separate orientation for our nurses and caregivers working in recovery. Marjorie Strawther was busy recruiting volunteers with time on their hands to begin counting pills. Pill counting is equal parts counting and conversation, not unlike a good old-fashioned quilting party!

Our first GYN patient in OR 1 lost a significant amount of blood and would need a transfusion on Sunday night. However, we had already identified a few donors and scheduled the lab to come out that afternoon and never missed a beat. Elena had US and Canadian blood coursing through her Guatemalan veins by 8:00 that evening. Before the day was done, our GYN surgeons had completed six cases and our plastic team two. We intentionally schedule a light load on Sunday afternoons for the plastic team as we like them to *get their groove on* before we start putting babies to sleep.

We were blessed to have two mission interns with us this week, Laurie Bennie who is completing her fourth year of medical school, and Andrew Dickerson, who joined us on Monday morning and will begin medical school in July. Andrew had only recently begun his internship on the coast, but did spend several weeks in language school in Antigua. We quickly tested his translation skills as we alternated sending him out to work with pediatrician, Dr. Katy Farrell, or translating in the recovery room. Dr. Farrell has a good knowledge of medical Spanish and Andrew conversational...they made a good team.

Eleven cases were on tap for Monday, a bit less than expected. One patient originally scheduled had an upper respiratory infection and another, high blood sugar. Without drama and any surprises, our plastic team completed five cases that day and our GYN's six cases. We were treated to our first devotional talk by Paavo Tucker that evening and it was indeed a treat. Paavo is finishing up his doctorate at Ashbury Theological Seminary and possesses a gift for delivering insightful, concise thoughts, thus endearing him to an already fatigued group each evening.

Tuesday found us with fourteen patients on our schedule, nine GYN and five plastic cases and the only surprises came from the US...thanks to the now infamous *polor vortex*. A few on our team needed to return early to deal with family and job related issues and unfortunately, they had flown down on Delta who was canceling all flights through Atlanta. We were able to move these team members to United on flights going through Houston with minimal trouble, though not minimal expense. The good news is that all who needed to get home, did so safely.

Our GYN's had a light day on Wednesday, with only five cases scheduled after eleven on Monday. A few servants were glad to get off their feet at a decent hour that afternoon, while our plastics team labored away.

The week was quickly coming to a close and we awoke on Thursday morning to a few more plastic cases that were completed before noon. We loaded up a bus for a trip to Lake Atitlan and San Lucas Toliman, getting them on the road shortly afternoon 12:00. However, they were forced to turn around an hour and half later after not being able to travel more than twenty-five kilometers due to road work and a traffic accident. The “lake” group returned in great spirits despite their travel difficulties and our kitchen staff hurriedly prepared them a late lunch.

Our week of surgery concluded with forty-five surgical patients, nineteen plastics and twenty-six GYN. The road work prompted a change in our Friday schedule as we decided to get on the road by 7:00 AM and beat the traffic jam. We were successful and arrived in Antigua by 9:45.

Our team photo is below, along with a few photos from the week. Enjoy the photos and know that humble servants made a supreme effort to glorify God this week. Number this scribe among those who believe His servants were successful.





Osman in a playful moment.



Amarily, one of the stars from The Faces of Guatemala video.