

Health Talents International

March 29-April 1, 2017

General/GYN Surgical Team Trip Report

Trip Participants: **General Surgeons:** Dave Mauterer, Michael Ross; **GYN Surgeons:** Jenny Bell, Kris Citty, John Kaczmarek; **Urologist:** Michael Flanagan; **Anesthesiologists:** Yarnell LaFortune, Archane Mane; **Anesthesia Residents:** Kareem Kassel, Joyce Liu; **Ophthalmologists:** Larry Patterson, Michael Patterson; **CRNA's:** Duane Gill, Tiffany Horton; **Physical Therapist:** Nathan Click; **Physician Assistants:** Chelsea Peterson, Tim Thurston ; **Surgical Techs:** Shanda Poitra, Richard Yates; **OR Nurses:** Lesa Dale, Samantha Pritchard, Mike Caldwell; **RN's Recovery:** Lisa Bartee, Margaret Bickley, Kara Booms, Judy Casey, Elizabeth Donaldson, Pam Flanagan, Rhonda Hendon, Nicole Nelson, Amanda Oliveira, Brenda Robinson, Bethany Thrun; **Marriage & Family Therapist:** Klay Bartee; **Caregivers:** Sarah Click, Ezra Desjarlais, Riley Hendon, Trevor Horton, Shweta Mane, Morgan Murphy, Mindy Yates; **Translators:** Joe Bell, Katylyn Beyer, Luis Barrunda, Manuel Guarcas, Gerardo Hernandez, Rita Sills; **Sterilization:** Tom Beckwith, Cary Sills, Doyle Robinson; **Trip Chaplain:** Cody Krantz; **Mr. Fix It:** Terry Doughty; **Mission UpReach Guests:** Caleb Gossett, Angel Sanchez, Donna Waldron; **HTI Team Leader:** Rick Harper

Life happens...love, and God win!

A few days prior to this trip, veteran RN, Kim Chester, had to back out due to an ailing mother. Life happened and love won with her staying home to care for her mother. Doyle Robinson's mother left the hospital one day before he and Brenda flew to Guatemala, she had a fall on Sunday and was taken to the hospital and placed in hospice care. Their flight was changed and they flew home on Monday. Life happened and love won as Doyle and Brenda arrived home in time to see his mother one last time. Read on to learn how this team, down two nurses before our first full day of surgery, pulled together and provided surgical care to seventy-two patients. Read on to see that God won!

This was the second surgical team to descend upon Clinica Ezell in March of 2017. Our Guatemala ministry team on the coast worked tirelessly to return things to readiness and to welcome a new team from the US, dozens of patients and their family members. We arrived on schedule Saturday afternoon, without airline delays or drama and with no missing luggage. We found a ready facility and dozens of patients waiting to be seen.

Upon arrival, we unloaded luggage, settled into our rooms, began inventorying supplies and seeing patients. While patients were being seen, our anesthesia crew began testing and readying equipment. A Penlon anesthesia machine was waiting on us, newly purchased in Guatemala with the display set in *Spanish*. Thanks to Luis, he and CRNA, Tiffany Horton figured out how to change the settings to English...reading Spanish is not one of Tiffany's skills.

The ARI anesthesia machines in OR's 2 & 3 continued with their temperamental ways, fortunately, CRNA, Duane Gill was able to get the unit in OR 2 to behave and while the machine in OR 3 was not as cooperative, our anesthesia providers adapted well. The ARI machines are less than five years old, but the humidity at Clinica Ezell has taken a toll on the computer circuitry. As funds allow, we will replace those with units not as reliant upon computer circuitry, more resistance to humidity and pneumatic in style. (If you have an extra \$22,750, we have a need, make that two needs at \$22,750 each.)

Following supper, we held a brief *housekeeping* orientation, conducted formal introductions and headed to bed with ten surgeries on the schedule for tomorrow. Sleep came easy.

Sunday morning found a few up earlier than they wished as their phone alarms jumped forward to Daylight Savings times, a practice Guatemala does not embrace. For our eastern time zone team members, it meant awaking two hours earlier than was necessary...it did not take long for them reset their phone, or to find the coffee pot throughout the day.

Those of us whose alarms were accurate, awoke rested, refreshed and ready for a new day, the last Lord's day of March, and welcomed the pat-pat sound of fresh tortillas and various birds chirping; a friendlier and soon very familiar alarm for the early risers, those known as the patio coffee club.

Eggs, beans, cereal, fresh juice, the aforementioned tortillas, and conversation were on the menu this peaceful morning. Old friendships were renewed, family updates shared and new friendships forged. Much like an annual church retreat, those who came together for a common purpose, find this is a time to reorient one's life and provide God with more margin, more space to show off. And God would deliver!

We strolled across the street to join the Montellano church family for worship, greeted by two children meeting us on the steps for a welcoming embrace. Carlos Baltodano shared a message from God's word, Josue led us in singing and Dr. Nehemias delivered communion thoughts when we partook in the supper of the Lord.

The transition from worshipping with the Montellano brethren often seems abrupt as we stack chairs, shake hands, exchange niceties with the local church family and head back to our waiting patients. There is a sense of urgency to begin our surgical orientation and commence with surgery. Knowing that many of those we just worshipped with have family members awaiting surgery makes the transition a bit easier, they too are anxious for us to begin surgery in a place where they say, "God works." God is winning.

Dr. Walter is waiting for us when we return to the dining room for orientation, having said goodbye to his family and made the 150 km drive from his home in Guatemala City. Orientation goes quickly, a prayer is offered, lunch is served and we identify a few O+ blood donors from the team. Patients are all on the table between 1:30 and 2:00 and ten patients later, off the table a little after 7:00. Two urology, two general, three gallbladders and three GYN cases.

But wait, one patient is having complications in postop and is returned to the OR. Her issue is quickly resolved and one unit of blood, donated only hours ago, is transfused. She never misses a beat, is discharged a couple days later and was doing fine at her post-operative checkup ten days later.

Though we had already worshipped earlier in the morning, we still found time to have a devotional before calling it a night. Cody Krantz, the youth minister from the North Blvd. Church of Christ in Murfreesboro, TN did a masterful job all week in his role as our trip chaplain. Not only did he keep us focused on the Father, he did so with tender-hearted, simple, short and thought provoking comments. (Cody said he was used to teaching teens with short attention spans, thus he was very comfortable speaking to weary servants at the end of each day.)



(Cody praying with and comforting a patient.)

Ten down, sixty-two to go.

Monday began with twenty patients scheduled, and twenty were completed. Five GYN, six gallbladders and nine general cases with no complications. Physical therapist, Nathan Click went out on mobile clinics, then returned to assist Noe Chan with his patients scheduled for treatment. (Noe is the physical therapy provider on our fulltime team.) Nathan, who had been to Guatemala one other time, found himself in the truck with HTI evangelist, Baldemar that day, their first time to meet and quite special since Nathan's home congregation, Riverchase Church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama has been supporting Baldemar since 2004.



(First time nurse, Margaret Bickley, with Danika and Dante. Their aunt brought two puppies and told them to pick one to keep...I sense conflict on the horizon. Thanks Aunt Luby!)

Five GYN, six gallbladders and seven general cases were on the docket for Tuesday and we're hitting on all cylinders now. Monday and Tuesday were challenging for our recovery room nurses after the loss of Brenda and Kim, and especially so for those working the midnight shift. Being short-handed meant a few nurses worked a day shift one day, followed by a couple of midnight shifts, then returning eight hours later for a day shift. Bethany Thrun, Margaret Bickley and Kara Booms were wonderful and gracious throughout the week, willing to help in any way and sacrificing sleep in the process. Love won.

When Wednesday rolled around, so did the realization that our week together was quickly coming to an end. This would be our last full day of surgery and the OR teams were now OR family and not ready to see the week to conclude. Five more GYN, six more gallbladders and seven general cases were completed that day with only one hiccup, eventually determined to be a false alarm.

One of our gallbladder patients was discharged and walking out the door when she became ill and complained of tightness in her chest. Immediately, we jumped into hyperdrive, got her on a gurney, moved her into an exam room, hooked up the EKG machine and readied the crash cart.

The preliminary diagnosis was she had gas from the residual CO₂ from her laparoscopic procedure and had simply not walked enough and moved around to expel the gas. (The abdomen is inflated with CO₂ during surgery to allow room for the procedure and good visualization on the monitor.) As it turned out, the preliminary diagnosis was sound and she was soon sent on her way. And while I never like to see the crash cart pulled out, it is comforting to see the professionalism and skills of our team on display.

Thursday, the last day for surgery and we have seven general cases on the board. All went well, surgery was done before noon and we scheduled a trip to the chocolate farm after lunch.

While a large contingency was exploring the chocolate farm, a special guest came for a visit...her story is on the next page.

Seven Years Since

Seven years since Noe and Franchesca became parents.

Seven years since their first child died at birth.

Seven years since Noe blamed Franchesca for their death of their child.

Seven years since Franchesca blamed Noe.

Seven years since they decided to divorce.

Seven years since God orchestrated a divine appointment for Noe and Franchesca.

In April of 2010, Marriage and Family Therapist, Dr. Klay Bartee accepted an offer to serve as trip chaplain for our April surgical team and as an added bonus, provide counseling, with the aid of a translator, for any one in need. It was at that point, Carlos Baltodano went to work identifying those in his circle of friends, within his personal ministry, who might benefit from Klay's gifts.

Bitter, hurting, searching and hoping, Noe and Franchesca came to see Klay as a last resort. Listening and seeking to understand are essential to strong relationships, maybe more so when you encounter tragedy and are searching for an explanation. Noe and Franchesca only knew their son was dead, blaming someone, even one another, was easier than having no real explanation. We are all like Noe and Franchesca, looking for an answer, one that fits nicely into our world view. Why do bad things happen to good people, why me, why now?

Though they are Christians, Noe and Franchesca are also Mayan and steeped in a culture that found explanations for such tragedies by crediting them to malevolent gods or spirits. The belief that evil people are *nawal* and have the ability to transform into animals and eat the souls of babies and sick people is just one example of seeking an explanation for the unknown. Illogical? Irrational?

No more so than believing your spouse is at fault for your child dying at birth.

Klay listened, helped them understand, reminded them of their love for one another, of God's love for them and put them on a path towards healing.

Franchesca came to see Klay this week, Noe was unable to come due to his work. She wanted to say thank you and provide a visible reminder to a man she credits with saving her marriage.



(Dr. Manuela, Carlos, Cindy, Franchesca and Klay)

Seven years since a marriage was saved...six years since Cindy was born to devoted, loving, Christian parents.

Klay would want me to say, to God be the glory!

Life happens...love, and God win. Don't you agree?

