

HTI August Surgical Trip
Clinica Ezell
August 6-13, 2011

Trip Participants: Surgeons: Dwayne Fulks MD, James Elmore MD, Stewart Lowry, MD, Philip Strawther, MD, Kirby Swetzer, MD; Anesthesia: Stephen Harvey, MD, Jane Thomas, MD, Gordon Corder, CRNA, Carrie Hovater, CRNA,; Pharmacist: William Phillips; Nurses: Glenn Berkey RN, Neva Berkey RN, Jennifer Hicks, RN, Jeni Huggins RN, Jill Keasling, RN, Monica Merriweather RN, Shana Phillips, RN, Jodi Pilot, RN, Leslie Shoemaker RN, Top Shoemaker, RN, Patsy Sikes RN, Katie Simmons, RN, Mike Caldwell LPN; Lab Tech: Louise Clites; Speech Pathologist: Jason Fuller; Surgical Asst: Amanda DePriest, CST, Derrick Sikes; PA Students: Lana Spry, Kelsey Young; PrePA; Samantha Adcock; Premed Students: Sarah Thomas, Zach Whiteside; Pre-nursing Students: Julie Ann Harper, Joelle Whitlock; Translators: Kathleen Fuller, Wendy Stetzing; Sterilization: Mike Branch, Jared Corder; Dental Asst: Susan Jordan Chaplain: John Mark Hicks; Compassionate Caregivers: Jakob Barber, AC Branch, Pat Dwyer, Alisha Hovater, Tom Knox, Nathan Lowry, Joel Sweitzer, Daniel Stetzing, Leigh Thomas; Mr. Fix-It: JD Elmore; Massage Therapist: Shanna Wilson; Team Leader: Rick Harper

We were blessed to have a large team on this trip and as a result, we had travelers on three different flights with Continental and one on Delta. Though seven missed their first flight on Continental, all but one team member arrived by 1:00 on Saturday afternoon. One member, Louise Clites, arrived Saturday night and spent the evening in Guatemala City before traveling down with Dr. Sierra on Sunday. We did have some baggage challenges as Continental misplaced one bag containing the much needed Zofran and Delta lost all three bags for Top and Lesli Shoemaker. By Tuesday, bag and team member were reunited.

Upon arrival in Montellano on Saturday evening, we were welcomed by three to four dozen patients waiting to be seen for preoperative exams or to spend the night for exams the next day. Translators and surgeons began seeing patients, our anesthesia team began setting up and checking out equipment and the rest of us unpacked more than two dozen bags of supplies. Supper and a brief orientation followed... then it was off to bed after a long, long day.

Sunday morning was a typical Sunday at Clinica Ezell with breakfast being served an hour later and a bit of leisure time before worship service with the Montellano church family. Following services Dr. Walter and Rosario provided a detailed orientation before lunch then surgery commenced. We had two general surgeons for the first time in a couple of years on this trip, along with a pediatric urologist, ENT and two plastic surgeons. Sunday proved to be a long day with surgery ending a bit after 8:00 PM. This isn't unusual the first day of surgery, but is nevertheless not a trend we want to keep throughout the week. Late nights begin to take their toll on everyone, especially our OR and recovery room nurses and surgical techs. We finished the day with seven general, three ENT and two plastic cases.

Unlike 2010, we never suffered any loss of water due to storms and the 2010 veterans were grateful for hot showers and running water. In anticipation of future issues with water access, Health Talents has constructed a large platform with that holds four, 10,000 liter tanks; approximately 2,000 gallons each. We had hoped to have the four tanks installed this week, but the two remaining tanks will be delivered the week of August 14. Check out the photo on the next page.



In addition to eighteen cases slated for Monday, we also began delivering ABC supplies to families in the departments of Quetzaltenango, Retahuleu and Suchitpequez. Each day, three to four team members traveled with Violeta and Luis to the various communities in our ABC Program and returned with heart-warming stories of grateful families and generosity that dwarfed their \$30 support each month. It was common to hear these stories around the dinner table or prior to the start of our devotionals. John Mark Hicks served as our trip chaplain and on Monday night, challenged us to “participate in the sharing of the gospel” through our service. He would affirm us for doing so, later in the week.

Dr. James Elmore is a pediatric urologist, and former MET student, who began coming down in August three years ago and he has seen the need for his special services grow demonstrably. Though he overlaps with general surgeons when it comes to pediatric hernia repair, he has been able to provide more, and greater, urology care each year. I suspect he would say this was his busiest year yet.

Tuesday was another large day with seventeen cases on tap and the last of our eleven ENT cases for the week. Dr. Jerry Templer would spend the rest of the week assisting Dr. Dwayne Fulks since Dr. Philip Strawther returned to the US on Wednesday. Our plastic team had four cases on Tuesday, three cleft repairs and one hand surgery. Little Santos had suffered severe burns on his hands and his little fists were balled up due to damage. Dr. Fulks is a specialist in hand surgery and did an amazing job on this surgery. Santos will have a lengthy recovery period and our September team will remove the pins that were placed in his fingers. (Warning, a graphic photo is on the next page.)



Tuesday's surgery went a little long and I promised our team that we would be done earlier on Wednesday as I could see fatigue in their eyes. Our team members come to serve and they want to do as much as possible and it is seldom a "universally popular" decision when we begin referring patients to the next team. Still, we completed surgery on twenty patients, our highest total for a single day, and all patients were out of the OR by 6:15. It was nice for all of the OR team members to join others for supper that night and relax just a bit before our final day of surgery on Thursday.

We scheduled some side trips to San Lucas Toliman on Thursday, and the need to limit our travel to daylight hours meant we needed to finish our cases by lunch time...or before. With sixteen patients scheduled and the need to change the dressing on Santos' hand, we needed the inspiration. (The dressing change for Santos required him to go under general anesthesia again and while it wasn't another surgical procedure per se, it might as well have been.)

Our lake trips to San Lucas were successful as we went in three shifts and we all returned safely and in time to hear the stories of Jason Fuller, Derrick Sikes and Patsy Sikes who were able to go into the homes of the ABC children they support. Dr. Stephen Harvey joined Derrick and Patsy for an experience he'll never forget and is already recruiting his mother, an RN for a future trip.

This was an incredible week with more than 80 surgical patients and 90 procedures. Our August dream team was completely made up of rookies, but they performed like veterans and did an amazing job.

We were blessed to have Jakob Barber with us on this trip, along with his granddad Tom Knox. Jakob's mother, Heather an RN and HTI veteran, was killed in a car accident when he was an infant and he was the lone survivor. Twelve years later, Jakob fulfilled his mother's dream of him serving in the mission field.

Antigua was calling on Friday, a mix of shopping, relaxing and ziplining. Everyone made it home safely on Saturday...all is well that ends well.