

Health Talents International January Surgical Clinic Jan 11-18, 2014

Team Participants: Surgeons: Tommy Hatchett, Roger Knowlton, Steven Scarcliff, Scott Smith, Andrea Yancey; Anesthesia: Ann Farrar, Lawrence Freund, Tiffany Horton, Phyllis Willis; Nurse Practitioners: Teresa Browning, Kathy Anderson; PA: Jonathan Clemens; Nurses: Bridgett Bednarz, Leah Bradshaw, , Linda Kelsey, Angie Martin, Myrna McGimsey, Laura Piedmont, Brenda Robinson, Kelly Smith, LeAnn Stacy, Ann Stowe, Jenni Whitefield; Surgical Tech: Dineen Cottrell, Ryan Lambert, Jeanette Matthews; Nursing Student: Erin Anderson; Nurses Aid: Terri Clemens; Translators: Dixie Barnes, Jeremy Crane, Rachel Finney, Alicia Ingram, Vicky Schandavel, Dakota West; Sterilization: Julie Anderson, Craig Bednarz, Mike McGimsey, Doyle Robinson; Caregivers: Daniel Clemens, Samuel Clemens, Trevor Horton, Atalia Ingram, Kristie Scarcliff, Emily Smith, Kristina Smith, Annalise Stacy, Robin Travis, Grayson Yates, Nancy Yates; Trip Chaplain: Colin Sherfield; El Salvador Guests: Dr. Yanira Lopez, Cecy Alvarado, Betsy Fuentes, Marcos Fuentes, Marin Gonzalez, Sarita Hernandez; Team Leader: Rick Harper

The phone calls, texts and e-mails began around 3:00 AM as flights were delayed out of Richmond, VA and the Nashville, TN flight experienced equipment trouble. Richmond travelers Kathy and Erin Anderson were moved to an American flight going through Miami; and though their flight was delayed by almost two hours, our Nashville travelers were moved to another plane, arrived in Houston and boarded in the nick of time...breathless and hungry. (They thought they'd have time to eat breakfast in Houston.). After a lengthy delay in customs, *the rules changed again*, and a brief wait on the Andersons, a team from fourteen US states and guests from El Salvador boarded a charter bus bound for Clinica Ezell. We arrived around 5:45 PM and quickly unpacked, sorted and inventoried supplies, prepped the OR and completed pre-op exams before supper and a brief orientation.

Colin Sherfield was our trip chaplain this trip and he regularly took us to the gospel of Luke for reminders to touch, interact and comfort our patients. Colin is the new youth minister at GracePointe Church of Christ in Montgomery and they serve as the supporting church for Carlos Baltodano, our Director of Coastal Operations. It was a special treat for Carlos to get to know Colin.

Our Sunday morning breakfast was a time for relaxing as old friends were reunited and new friendships formed. Carlos treated us to a bi-lingual service that morning and as always, the singing was rich and inspirational.

Following worship service, we met with Dr. Sierra and Rosario. We've continue to streamline the orientation as we recognize many of our veterans have gone through this on multiple occasions. However, it is important, especially for our newcomers. Rosario has begun meeting with the nurses and caregivers after lunch, thus her role in the initial orientation now takes minimal time. Surgeries began around 1:30 and we completed one GYN case, eight general cases and were out of the OR at a reasonable time in two of the three OR's. *OR one had three incisional hernia's that afternoon as we wanted to provide our patient with the greatest amount of recovery time during the week by tackling the more difficult cases earlier in the week.*

Our recovery ward care was excellent all week long and when we needed a helping hand, nurse practitioners Teresa Browning and Kathy Anderson jumped in with their enhanced skills, we even got to see Erin Anderson, a future nurse work side by side with her mother. We appreciate all of our volunteers and give a little extra love to those who humbly set aside their higher level of training to perform more simple tasks. Humility and service are the norm with our teams, how else do you explain the work of Teresa and Kathy, or having a PhD in plant science, Craig Bednarz and chemical engineer, Mike McGimsey, washing surgical instruments in our sterilization room.

Monday yielded sixteen cases, five GYN and eleven general surgeries and we were out of the OR's a little bit earlier. Dr. Scott Smith, who specializes in thyroid surgery, and Dr. Steven Scarcliff, a colo-rectal specialist, were both able to use their special training in addition to performing the more common hernia surgeries on the schedule.

Tuesday's pace was a little bit heavier with six GYN and twelve general cases for the day and we were moved along at a steady pace. Much like last year, by the time Tuesday evening rolled around, we had no empty beds in the recovery ward. The incisional patients from Sunday and Monday, along with one thyroid and all of our hysterectomy patients were still occupying their beds...but doing well. Most of them would be discharged on Wednesday morning and we could see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Nurse Practitioner, Teresa Browning was able to go out with a mobile medical team on Tuesday, while Kathy Anderson had done so on Monday. Since we were able to send translators with each of them, they proved to be quite helpful to our three physicians on the coast.

In a typical week, Tuesday has the largest number of patients on our schedule, but this was not a typical week. We had five GYN and fifteen general cases scheduled and it would prove to be our most challenging day in the OR. However, the challenge would come in ways no one suspected.

Late Wednesday morning we lost power for about an hour, thus adding to an already lengthy day. Our sterilization crew determined it was best to not run the autoclave during surgery as the wiring was overheating. Not a big deal as we had sufficient surgical trays and instruments sterilized and ready. Even with the electricity hiccup, I can remember thinking this has been a very smooth week.

All of that changed late in the afternoon as one of our US volunteers, veteran translator and first year nursing student, Vicky Schandavel, collapsed in pain as she came out of the bathroom in the physicians lounge. PA, and former EMT, Jonathan Clemens was there to provide immediate attention and call for help. In short order, Drs. Scott Smith and GYN Tommy Hatchett were beside her along with anesthesiologist Lawrence Freund. Dr. Freund provided pain treatment as we began to identify the cause for her sudden illness and intense pain. The preliminary diagnosis was an ectopic pregnancy as Vicky had confided in Dr. Hatchett that she learned she was pregnant on Thursday before our trip began. Over the next couple of hours we ran various tests and ultrasounds to rule out other possibilities and within three hours of Vicky collapsing in the physician lounge, she was in the OR undergoing surgery at the hands of veteran, Christian surgeons who knew and loved her.

Within a few moments, it was clearly an ectopic pregnancy and Dr. Hatchett identified the ruptured fallopian tube, stopped the bleeding and made the repair. Not only did Vicky not lose an ovary, she did not lose her ruptured fallopian tube. We breathed a very brief sigh of relief before confronting our next challenge.

Vicky lost a lot of blood and needed to be medically evacuated to the US as soon as she was hemodynamically stable! OR 1 was turned into an ICU room and Dr. Lawrence Freund and RN, Jenni Whitefield stayed with her all night long.

Health Talents takes out an emergency medical evacuation policy on each of our volunteers and this was to be the first, and we hope only, occasion it is used. It took very little time to obtain approval from our insurance provider to medi-vac Vicky to the US, but it took a little more time to settle on the best transportation method and to receive flight plan approval from the Guatemala government. We finally settled on moving Vicky 9 km to a nearby soccer field where a paramedic helicopter could land, then meeting the medi-vac jet in Guatemala City. Everything went as planned and Vicky was transferred to a hospital in Ft. Lauderdale, FL where she eventually received a blood transfusion and was released on Sunday, four days after surgery. She was accompanied throughout the process by good friend, RN Kelly Smith.

Ask yourself, what are the odds that you experience an ectopic pregnancy and fallopian rupture fifty feet from an OR staffed with two GYN and four general surgeons? Vicky, her husband Chris, and all on our team see the hand of God in a mighty, might way.



The rest of our week seemed a bit anticlimactic after Vicky's unscheduled surgery, but we still had patients scheduled for surgery that Thursday. Since the power outage slowed our work in the sterilization room, several of us stayed up until after midnight to autoclave all of the instruments we'd need for Thursday. At one level, that wasn't a big deal as none of us were going to bed until Vicky was stable. Nevertheless, Craig Bednarz, Mike McGimsey and Doyle Robinson were troopers and did not leave until all was ready for the next day. In the end, we completed two GYN cases and six general cases on Thursday. And Dr. Knowlton got a bonus with two colposcopies that afternoon.

We finished the week with seventy-one surgical patients, the two minor colposcopies and Vicky.

Every trip to Guatemala is memorable and possesses some unforgettable moments. January 2014 is one for the ages as trials and tribulations gave way to prayer and praise. Hope overcame worry, love overcame fatigue and God painted another masterpiece of faith on our hearts and in our minds.



(Our special patient Vicky in a 2013 photo)



January 2014 Team