

Health Talents International January Surgical Clinic Jan 10-17, 2015

Team Participants: Surgeons: Tommy Hatchett, Roger Knowlton, Stewart Lowry, Steven Scarcliff, Scott Smith, Tina Whitworth; Anesthesia: Tiffany Horton, Duane Gill, Gene Reames, Aaron Towler; Nurse Practitioner: Kathy Anderson; 4th Year Resident/Mission Intern: Mitchell Ramsey; Nurses: Mike Caldwell, Amy Corella, JM Corella, Ashley Franklin, Kara Garrett, Careie Gibson, Angela Gleaves, Matt Jefferson, Rebeca Mullins, Katy Schroeder, Kelly Smith, Ann Stowe, Jenni Whitefield; Surgical Tech: Dineen Cottrell; Nursing Student: Alicia Adams, Erin Anderson, Summer Cottrell, Destinee Martinez, Mat Molina, Miranda Palmer, Christina Ponomarkeno, Vicky Schandavel, Audrey Zinsmeister; Translators: Dixie Barnes, Jeremy Crane, Rachel Finney, Alicia Garcia-Ingram, Federico Echeverria, Maria Echeverria, Lucy Pagan, Rita Sills, Linly Stowe; Sterilization: Roy DeSha, Jr., Josh Gibson, Cary Sills, ; Caregivers: Missy Hatchett, Trevor Horton, Alena Lowry, Bennett Lowry, Clay Smith, Emily Smith, Kristina Smith; Trip Chaplain: David Dorantes; Team Leader: Rick Harper

Once again, Richmond travelers Kathy and Erin Anderson, began texting in the wee hours of the morning with flight trouble. She said next year, I'm just driving to Dulles for a direct flight! Mechanical trouble meant she ended up on Delta and arrived Saturday night and she was later joined by Dr. Roger Knowlton and Lucy Pagan whose Burlington, VT flight was canceled. We put the four of them up for the night at Hotel Barcelo and arranged for Dr. Sierra to pick them up Sunday morning.

The rest of the team arrived right at 6:00 PM that evening and in short order, unpacked, sorted and inventoried supplies, prepped the OR and completed pre-op exams before supper and a brief orientation.

Our Sunday morning breakfast was peaceful and relaxing as old friends caught up on happenings since we were last together and new friendships were forged. Our worship time with the Montellano family was uplifting and encouraging, made even more so by the presence of Marlene. She continues to undergo treatment for cancer and the outlook is grim. However, she is faithfully studying the Bible and discovering the spiritual healing found in Christ. I have little doubt that she will surrender to Jesus, before she surrenders to cancer. Marlene is pictured below with Dr. Silvia Albizures, one of our dentists and a treasured part of the HTI family herself.



We were blessed by the excitement and energy of six nursing students from ACU, along with one of their instructors, Rebekah Mullins, and they were up to any adventure or task. They were joined by two other nursing students, Erin Anderson and Vicky Schandavel, making this the largest contingency of nursing students in recent memory. A few will most assuredly become regular participants once they complete their studies.

Following worship service it was time for our surgical orientation and to start a new chapter in our history. Long-time nurse, Rosario, is no longer with Health Talents, following her marriage to Jerry Erwin. Darling and Marta have taken the reigns with Darling assuming the leadership role previously filled by Rosario. The week went off without a hitch and much credit goes to Darling, Marta and to the ever capable Carlos.

Surgeries began around 1:30 and we completed three GYN cases and seven general cases. The day went a bit long, pretty normal on Sunday as the teams have yet to gel and because we schedule the more difficult cases early in the week to allow for extended recovery time. We missed trip veteran and OR nurse extraordinaire, Leah Bradshaw, this week. She came down with the flu and backed out on Friday, sparing us all the risk of a shared virus. Nevertheless, we had a strong OR surgery crew with veterans Mike Caldwell, Dineen Cottrell, Kelly Smith and Ann Stowe. Their experience helped newcomers, Carrie Gibson and Missy Hatchett settle into their roles.

David Dorantes was our trip chaplain this trip and he would remain in Guatemala for another week to conduct a leadership evangelism seminar. David, a minister with the Riverchase Church of Christ and one of our supporting churches, is a native Spanish speaker from the Cancun area of Mexico and shares a deep affection, if not heritage, from the Mayan of Guatemala. His ability to converse with our patients and draw them into spiritual conversations was a pleasure to behold.

Our recovery ward was very well staffed with Jenni Whitefield serving as our charge nurse. We have ten RN's and eight nursing students and were able to provide excellent coverage. Jenni, Kathy Anderson and JM Corella were our only veteran nurses in recovery and provided excellent leadership to our first-timers.

Monday's schedule began with five GYN and fourteen general cases, but we ended up moving one GYN case to Tuesday. Moving a patient to the next day is always a difficult decision as the patient had been prepped and waiting most of the day. We explained the cases that day took longer than expected and she deserved to have a well-rested surgeon and team.

Tuesday's pace was a bit lighter, but not by much. Our GYN patient who was moved from Monday was first on the schedule for Tuesday morning and at day's end, another four GYN and twelve general cases were completed. Once again, we had hit our stride and the days became smoother. Our team members had learned where needed supplies were located or who to ask, thus the turnover time between cases grew shorter.

Our case load on Wednesday was seventeen, with three GYN and fourteen general cases. One of our GYN patients encountered high blood pressure and was rescheduled for February, otherwise we'd have had four GYN cases on Wednesday. Sixty-one cases going into Thursday and our team was looking forward to an earlier supper and a time of singing with our patients in the recovery ward.

The tradition of everyone going down to the ward to sing to our patients at least one night during the week has proved to be a highlight for those working recovery, our patients and those singing praises to our Lord. Every once is encouraged to walk among our patients to shake a hand, offer a pat on the shoulder and in some cases, share a hug. Tears flow freely and hearts are lifted for all.

We finished the week with sixty five cases after Thursday's four general surgeries. Surgery was complete by noon and twenty-one of our group departed for San Lucas Toliman and a tranquil lunch on the shore of Lake Atitlan. Another dozen took a van ride to the chocolate "cacao" farm after lunch.

Thursday night is our sharing night, the adult version of summer camp or teen retreat as we encourage every team member to share a special memory during our devotional time. This was one for the ages! Vicky Schandavel asked to go first, otherwise she was not sure she'd be able to share her story. If you want more than the "Readers Digest" version, you should read the January 2014 trip report. The short version is that Vicky became a patient in 2014 due to an ectopic pregnancy and ruptured fallopian tube. We performed surgery on Wednesday and she was medivaced on Thursday back to the US. Vicky returned this year, a measure of closure for her, and she wanted to thank everyone who cared for her last year. And she did...through her tears.



One more highlight came about our last evening together as we were able recognize Josue Alvarez as our first Jackson C. Coker Scholar. The Jackson C. Coker scholarship is part of our Bates Scholarship Program, but carries with it a special gift over and above the scholarship funding support. Josue was presented a certificate and a panoramic otoscope for use in medical school and eventually in his practice as a physician.

(Board member, Dr. Scott Smith is pictured with Josue and Rick Harper.)

Our first surgical trip of 2015 came to a successful conclusion with all volunteers save one, safely back home. Mitch Ramsey is a fourth year medical student in the midst of an internship with Health Talents and will remain in Guatemala until February 7. Our patients returned for post-op checks on Friday, January 23 and showed no signs of complications. To God Be the Glory!



January 2015 Surgical Team