

## **HEALTH TALENTS INTERNATIONAL**

El Salvador Mobile Medical Trip Report

July 25-30, 2012

Team Members: Physicians: Lesca Hadley, David Weed, Celeste Whisenant; RN; Marcy Long; Caregiver: Gary Tabor; El Salvador Ministers: Jose Castillo, Adrian Larin, Jesus Hernandez; El Salvador Scholarship Students: Cecy Alvarado, Norma Romero; El Salvador Translator/Medical Student: Stephanie Gutierrez; Trip Leaders: Rick Harper, Julie Wheatley

This was our inaugural mobile team to La Palma, the community in consideration for a future HTI mission team. Our group was small compared to Guatemala teams and with the strong support we received from Salvadoran volunteers it was just the right size. In addition to those listed above, we had four volunteers from the nursing program based in San Salvador.

We arrived on Wednesday a bit before noon, but were delayed in customs for several hours as they inventoried our medicines and determined we must pay a 30% duty. Not a real pleasant experience, but our luggage did arrive and we all made it to La Palma by 5:30 that afternoon and settled into our rooms. Following supper, we had a “pill counting” party in preparation for clinics the next day.

Unlike Guatemala where we have a full time team in place and are able to arrive knowing that most of our supplies are ready and waiting, this team had to bring everything with them. Medicines, pill counters, prescription bags, scales, patient charts, tongue blades, gloves...and you get the picture. It was nice to have so many veterans on such a small team and as you might imagine, they were wonderful and well prepared.

We worked with two congregations during our stay, one in La Palma and the other in San Ignacio, four kilometers to the north. Jesus Hernandez is the minister in San Ignacio and Jose Castillo in La Palma. Each of these ministers helped select the towns where we held clinic and recruited volunteers from their congregations to attend clinics and help with evangelism.

Thursday began with one clinic in La Palma, a short walk from our host hotel, Hotel La Palma. Drs. Lesca Hadley and Celeste Whisenant saw forty-two patients that day, well within our optimum range of 20-30 per day, per healthcare provider. They were busy, yet had plenty of time to listen to their patient's needs and symptoms. The other team traveled to Canton El Centro, about one hour from La Palma and an additional 3-4,000 feet in elevation. We care for sixty-six patients, a busy day yet still with sufficient time to spend with our patients. A great first day!

Friday clinics were held in two locations as well. Drs. David Weed and Celeste Whisenant traveled to Rio Abajo, a community not too far from Canton El Centro, where they saw forty-seven patients. Dr. Weed is a pediatrician and saw more than his share of adults this trip and was a good sport about it. Of course, Dr. Whisenant was not above a little negotiating with David as she made him agree to send her “three cute children” in exchange for her performing a...shall we

say “posterior” exam on an elderly female patient. Team two went to Las Cruces, a small community near La Palma and cared for twenty-three patients.

Our last day of clinic was Saturday with one team returning the La Palma church and caring for eighteen patients, while the other team went to the church in San Ignacio and treated fifty-three patients and made one home visit. The San Ignacio team had a ninety-eight year old patient carried into the clinic by one of our volunteers as he was unable to walk and had pneumonia. A few hours after an injection of Rocephin, our frail patient was sitting up and eating. We returned on Sunday morning to worship with the church family in San Ignacio and were able to look in on Antonio.

Sunday was a time to worship with the two church families, enjoy one last meal of “pupusas” and spend a little time in the local market before returning to San Salvador and a hotel near the airport.

Our travel on Sunday was uneventful and all returned safely on Monday morning.

The future of our work in La Palma remains in question and decisions will be made in coming weeks or months. However, we could not have asked for a better first trip and the relationships we nurtured hold great promise.

### **Pill Counting Time**



**Hotel La Palma**



**A view of Honduras from El Salvador**

