

HEALTH TALENTS INTERNATIONAL

Surgery Clinic Trip Report

June 2-9, 2012

Team Members: Surgeons: Drs. Scott Blackburn, Melissa Bishop, Ben Doke, Charles Gross and A.D. Smith; Anesthesiologist Drs. Byron Brown, Cynthia Brown, Joey Tilton and Steve Walsh; Nurses: Glenn Berkey, Margaret Bell, Neva Berkey, Joy Bernardo, Meagan Celsor, Jeanie Damren, Leslie Doke, Denise Dean, Shandi Matthews, Katrina Miller, Kim Neatherin, Gail Nowlin, Heather Peets, Eliana Ramos, Rachel Reiboldt, Kellie Santus, Jessica Sowulewski, Smitha Tomy, Jane Walsh; Surg Tech: Kim Perryman; Nursing Students: Laura Griffin, Mary Hammack; Circulator: Chris Torregosa; Sterilization: Kim Bradley, Charlie Gross; Caregivers: Chara Barbee, Kelsey Bradley, Susan Harper, Kay Reiboldt; Translators: Bryana Pardo, Sarah Robb; Artist: Sharron Smith; Trip Chaplain: Mark Dean;; Trip Leader: Rick Harper.

Recent team members from some departure points in the US have found it increasingly difficult to make the morning connection to Guatemala on Saturday and are flying into Houston on Friday night before catching the Saturday morning flight, or directly to Guatemala on Friday night. While both scenarios require an extra night of hotel stay, both groups are more rested on Saturday upon arriving in Guatemala. Additionally, this reduces the number of those who miss their flight due to connection delays.

However, the airlines are batting a 100 percent with lost luggage this year as both United and Delta lost luggage for three team members...and missed connections could not be blamed. They either checked in at Houston or Delta for a direct flight, but still no luggage. The good news, our United travelers received their luggage on Sunday and Delta on Tuesday. The three young ladies, Kellie, Laura and Jess were troopers.

The veterans on this team were pleasantly surprised to see the new bus service we are using, air-conditioned! This was a real plus when it took us three hours to leave the city limits of Guatemala City, traffic was a wee bit slow. Regardless, we arrived safely, unpacked, inventoried all supplies while our surgeons and translators began seeing patients.

Sunday, June 2: We followed our traditional Sunday schedule, breakfast was served at 8:00 instead of 7:00, and we had a leisure morning before worshipping with the Montellano church family. Our six MET students living on the coast joined us for worship service, but returned to Chicacao to be with the coastal families. We completed fourteen cases that day, quite a large number of cases for a Sunday afternoon. As you might imagine, we worked a bit late that evening to complete four GYN and nine general cases.

Mark Dean was our trip chaplain, he and his wife Denise were missionaries in Chile for nine years and their Spanish skills were a great help throughout the week. Mark encouraged and challenged us throughout the week.

Monday, June 3: This was the first time our June surgical team included GYN, we were experiencing a backlog of GYN patients. Fortunately, Dr. Ben Doke, former MET student and veteran HTI surgeon signed up early and we added a first-timer, Dr. Melissa Bishop. We completed five GYN cases and thirteen general cases on Monday, a very solid day. General surgeon, Dr. AD Smith made his eighth trip, while Dr. Charles Gross of Tuscaloosa came for the first time. Dr. Gross brought this son, Charlie, and the so enjoyed their time in Guatemala they extended their stay after we left to visit Tikal. I suspect they will return.

One of our favorite artist, Sharron Smith, would bless us with another mural this week and Monday was the planning and sketching day. We now have the mural shown below in the patient preop area, a very comforting scene.



Tuesday, June 4: We had fifteen cases scheduled for today, but one of our GYN cases, Juana, required hernia repair and a hysterectomy. The difficulties with her surgery meant we postponed one case until Wednesday. Juana suffered complications and had to be taken back into the OR around midnight. Our surgeons, anesthesia and RN's jumped into action and after a few tense minutes the bleeding was stopped and Juana was fine. However, the three operations she ended up having meant she needed a blood transfusion. The lab we use for this purpose was called, donors identified and by 4:00 AM that morning, she was receiving her first unit of blood. ***Thank you, Chara, Leslie, Melissa and Scott.***

Wednesday, June 5: After a long night on Tuesday with several getting to bed around 5:00 AM, it would have been nice to have a light schedule for Wednesday. No such luck as we had eighteen cases scheduled and a few on our team were moving slow. Two of our blood donors required a liter of lactated ringer to replace the fluids they lost as they just didn't feel good that day. All four of the donors went to bed within a few minutes after donating, thus they did not drink much before going to sleep and woke up a bit dehydrated.

All of the surgeries went well and we finished the day around 6:00 PM.

Thursday, June 6: We bid a temporary farewell to Dr. Ben and Leslie Doke and Drs. Byron and Cindy Brown on Thursday morning. Both of these couples are deeply committed to HTI and have never been to Chichi and seen our highland work. Since we do not do any GYN cases on Thursday, we scheduled a shuttle for them on Thursday morning. Unfortunately, Ben was really ill and we sent him off with an IV set, meds and lactated ringer as a precaution. He made the trip fine, Ben is Texas tough, saw Clinica Caris and some of the highland sites before receiving two liters of fluid later that day. When we met up on Friday morning in Antigua, Ben was back to 90%.

Six cases were on tap for Thursday, bringing our total for the week to sixty-nine cases. Everyone who wanted to go Lake Atitlan was able to make the trip on Thursday, a wonderful respite after a busy week.

All of our patients, including Juana, were discharged on Friday and every team member made it home safely. That is what I call a successful week, praise God!

