

HEALTH TALENTS INTERNATIONAL

Surgery Clinic Trip Report

June 2-9, 2014

Team Members: Surgeons: Drs. Grady Bruce, Ben Doke, Charles Gross and Michael Ross; Anesthesiologist Drs. Joey Tilton and Steven Walsh; CRNA's: Jan DeHaven and Brian Raymon; Nurses: Dennise Baker, Diane Brewer, Jeanie Damren, Leslie Doke, Billy Floyd, Tara Fuchs, Barbara Jones, Valentina Long, Roni McDowell, Janet McNeil, Ericka Medina, Lauren Russell, Madison Vaughn, Jane Walsh and Cindy Womble; Surgical Techs: Ray Coast and Rudi Fritz; OR Circulators: Lauren Gross and Chris Torregosa; Med Tech/LPN: Carrie Anderson; Medical Students: Jeremy Archer, Gabby Brown, Margaret O'Neal and Necrisha Roach; Dental Asst: Leea Sills; Sterilization: Susan Harper, Rick Jones and Cary Sills; Caregivers: Elayna Bruce, Jessica Bruce, Brenda Hunter, Jessica Hynds, Molly Neyland, Kay Reiboldt, Candace Taylor, Cheri Taylor and Emily Woody; Translators: Julia Little, Rita Sills; Trip Leaders: Rick Harper.

Saturday morning came early for most of us as we were at our various regional airports by 4:30 AM to catch connecting flights to Atlanta or Houston. All seemed well until Valentina Long called to say her flight out of Savannah was delayed and she would likely miss her connection out of Atlanta. We're accustomed to flight trouble and have plans in place, so while it wasn't difficult for HTI to adjust, it was a bit unnerving for Valentina. Nevertheless, she arrived safely on Saturday night and navigated customs and the shuttle to the hotel without difficulty. She arrived safely on Sunday morning, shortly before noon.

Lauren Russell wishes the same could be said for her luggage! Lauren's flight originated in Houston on Saturday morning, but they nevertheless lost her bag and did not complete delivery until Tuesday.

Our trip to Ezell was delayed due to filing luggage claims and while the trip was smooth, we arrived much later in the afternoon than is optimal. We quickly sorted through dozens of bags of supplies in the dining room, while our translators and surgeons began seeing patients. With so many still seeing patients at 8:30 that evening, we had an abbreviated orientation and dispensed with our normal round robin introductions to one another.

Sunday, June 3: Sunday mornings are so routine, we could almost use the same script for each trip report. A relaxing morning spent getting to know one another and catch up with June veterans, followed by worship service, orientation, lunch and off to an overly optimistic surgery schedule. Since we do not begin surgery until the afternoon and with OR teams who've yet to work together, Sunday's run a bit slower and sometimes longer. Our volunteers come to work, to serve and they do so with tremendous energy and passion. How else do you explain completing three urology, two GYN and seven general cases by 8:30 that night?

Monday, June 4: Seven GYN cases and thirteen general patients were waiting for us on Monday morning. A challenging, but manageable day even though we loaded some of the more difficult cases to start the week and allowed for additional recovery time. We were blessed with an outstanding nursing staff this week and were able to work with four RN's on the first two shifts in the recovery room each day and three at night. Having a dozen RN's enhances the care we are able to provide and creates a more joyous, pleasant environment. And when you add in veteran caregivers to run for water, help move patients, take them to the bathroom, change linens and simply provide comfort...you see a few more smiles and less swollen feet.

Rookie caregiver, Brenda Hunter, with veterans Jessica Hynds and Kay Reiboldt.
(See those smiles...we don't show feet or cankles!)



Tuesday June 5: Today's schedule was a bit lighter and after one very long day, one a bit longer than expected, this was a welcome respite. Four GYN and twelve general cases meant the OR's were empty by 5:30 and a few walked into town to the bakery. It is normally Tuesday before all kinks are worked out and this was no exception. By this time, our circulators know where most supplies are located, our scrub techs and OR nurses have adapted to surgeon style and our anesthesia crew has become familiar with our equipment. (Dr. Steve Walsh was "tongue in cheek" appreciative for the opportunity to use equipment manufactured in China.)

The lighter schedule on Tuesday permitted our surgeons to complete their consults for Wednesday in time to address a potentially, very light schedule on Wednesday. We had eleven of our Tuesday consults who either did not require surgery, were beyond our capability or did not show up. The last thing we want is for our volunteers to travel a couple of thousand miles and not be busy.

We quickly kicked into overdrive and called our Wednesday consults and asked them to arrive Wednesday morning having fasted throughout the night. As a result, our schedule grew from eight cases to sixteen, a very productive day. And we called a few patients anticipating surgery in August, to come in Wednesday afternoon.

Wednesday, June 6: Final count on Wednesday, five GYN and eleven general cases.

Our trip chaplain scheduled for this week, Alan Ritchie, was recently diagnosed with cancer and while he is doing fine, his energy level following chemotherapy meant he need to remain in Texas. Dr. Ben Doke, Dr. Joey Tilton and surgical tech Ray Coast stepped in to fill that void during our evening devotional period. All three did a fine job of reminding us why we serve, why we should continue serving and called on us to be the light.

(Our charge nurse in the recovery room, Leslie Doke, doing a little domestic surgery. Leslie, whose husband Dr. Ben Doke joins our board in October, informed us that she was eighteen weeks pregnant in the airport in Houston. Pretty amazing lady!)



Thursday, June 7: Thursday is our traditional lump and bump, minor surgery day. Ten cases were on the board, one GYN and nine general cases. Surgery was done by noon and many in the group headed to San Lucas Toliman to enjoy Lake Atitlan, one of Guatemala natural treasures. Surgical tech, Rudi Fritz, has recently be researching the best places in the world to retire and told me that Lake Atitlan was in the top ten. No surprise here!

While many of us traveled to the lake, others remained back at Ezell to care for patients and just to be sure Dr. Doke did not feel like he was on vacation, we lined up more than ten GYN consults and colposcopy patients to fill his afternoon.

(Our most photographed patient for the week and everyone's abuelita...grandmother. Tiny, energetic, talkative and a cutup. In the south, we'd affectionately call her a mess.)



All of our patients were discharged on Friday morning, travels to Antigua went smooth and every team member arrived home safely. Those two items, patients discharged and safe travels are never taken for granted and we praise God for his traveling mercies and healing touch.

