

## **HEALTH TALENTS INTERNATIONAL**

### **Surgery Clinic Trip Report**

June 3-10, 2017

Team Members: Surgeons: Drs. Ben Doke, Ana-Maria Gray, Ralph Marrero, George Robertson and Mark Williams; Anesthesiologist: Drs. Brian Alexander and Russell Harris; CRNA's: Melinda Gibson and Buddy Malone; Physical Therapist: Pam Gorke; Nurses: Fernanda Cannon, Jeanie Damren, Leslie Doke, Lindsey Hendricks, Jennifer Hicks, Brooke Hutson, Elizabeth Marrero, Tianna Mashburn, Ericka Medina, Laura Nix, Tana Overman, Samantha Pritchard, Rachel Reiboldt, Alyssa Smith, Susan Thomas, Becky Tilton and Jane Walsh; Surgical Tech: Elyse Boyle; Pharmacist: Aaron Head; Pharmacy Tech: Chelsie Morein; Nursing Student: Kaylee Toillion; OR Lay Circulator: Emily Woody; Sterilization: Jimmie Harper, Susan Harper and Cary Sills; Caregivers: Mason Alexander, Callie Doke, Susan Dunay, Gwen Harris, Zane Harris, Hollis Hightower, Nancy Land, Avery Land, Lydia Marrero, Vivian Marrero, Kay Reiboldt, Amy Scott and Faith Tilton; Translators: Benjamin Brazzel, Cynthia Brazzel, Alondra Brazzel, Megan Cannon, Brianna Cannon, Julie Ann Harper, Rita Sills and John Wright; Trip Chaplain: John Land; Trip Leader: Rick Harper.

A dozen on our team opted to fly into Guatemala City on Friday night and take the shuttle back to the airport around noon to meet those of us who had been traveling since before dawn. By the time the Saturday flyers landed, we had been alerted to six bags that did not make the trip with us. (Delta and United were the guilty parties and we received the delayed luggage two days later.)

Filing luggage claims created a small delay, but we were on the road shortly after 2:00 and arrived at our destination three hours later.

Smiling faces greeted us upon our arrival, those of our full-time team members and our patients. We promptly unpacked and sorted supplies, began seeing patients and readying the OR for surgery on Sunday. Supper, introductions and orientation gave way to the beds calling our names as we settled in for a peaceful night's rest.

Sunday, June 4: A Saturday evening rain brought the temperature down a bit, cool to some, bearable to others, depending upon your personal thermostat setting. Regardless, we awoke refreshed and ready to embrace a new day. The patio coffee club assembled well before the majority made their way to the dining room where coffee was waiting and breakfast was being prepared. Eggs, beans, fresh fruit and tortillas!

A schedule of eleven surgeries greeted us that morning, overly ambitious for sure, but we'd address that after lunch. It was time to lift our voices in praise in shared worship with our Guatemala brethren and believers from thirteen different states. Following our worship services, we gathered for our surgical orientation as first-time RN, Fernanda Cannon translated for Dr. Walter Sierra. Originally from Ecuador, Fernanda became a Christian while in the US as an exchange student in Bentonville, AR, then found her way to Harding University for a nursing degree. She brought two of her daughters, Megan and Brianna, to serve as translators in the recovery room and mobile clinics for the week. Surgeries began after lunch and we soon modified the schedule to a more reasonable number. Two GYN, two ENT and five General/Ped Urology cases for the day!

Regular readers of our trip reports will know that two of our greatest needs on each trip are nurses for recovery and translators. June was as well-staffed as any team in recent memory with thirteen nurses, one nursing student and sixteen Spanish speakers. One of those, John Wright, worked with Health Talents in the early nineties and had not been back in twenty years. John enjoyed many reunions throughout the week, some of them were children when he left and are now nurses, physicians and dentists on our team.

Monday, June 5: We only had one ENT surgeon on this trip, Dr. Ralph Marrero, and we worked hard to not overschedule his cases since some procedures take 3-4 hours. Our plan worked well and Ralph did an excellent job with consultations and surgery. He only had three patients on Monday, but would finish the week with eighteen. Our general room was rocking along with ten cases on Monday, and room three completed another five GYN cases. A very smooth second day free of complications.

Tuesday June 6: Noe Chan, our staff physical therapy provider had arrived on Monday, but today would go out on mobile clinics. Physical Therapist, Pam Gorke, a rookie, went out with Noe and saw patients in the field for a wonderful and enlightening day. All the while, another fifteen surgeries were taking place at Clinica Ezell. Forty-two surgeries through two and a half days of surgery and the only complication was one of our own, Mason Alexander came down with a stomach bug and required a day of rest and multiple bags of IV fluids. Heat, humidity and a change in diet likely contributed to his illness.

John Land, long-time board member and immediate past-president served as our trip chaplain this week. He shared the wisdom of a husband, father, grandfather and elder in his stories and devotional thoughts. Following his devotional on Tuesday night, we walked across to the recovery room to sing songs of praise and to pray with our patients. This young tradition is enjoyed by all, especially our patients when we sing "Alabaré or Demos Gracias," two Spanish favorites.



(Brooke Hutson, a 2016 OC nursing student, returns as an RN. She is pictured with Lindsey Hendricks, one year out of nursing school and on our inaugural trip.)

Wednesday, June 7: Wednesday began with a light schedule, but we brought several patients in for early consults and were able to add them to the schedule, finishing with seventeen for the day. Five GYN, five ENT and seven general cases made for a very productive Wednesday.

We were out of the OR before 7:00 and began looking forward to Thursday, a day of mental transition. Thursday is a lighter day of surgery as we schedule less complicated cases, an effort to ensure all patients are discharged on Friday morning.

Thursday, June 8: Breakfast was a bit more leisurely for some on Thursday, not quite the same sense of urgency when we only have eight patients scheduled for surgery. The pace even allowed our resident birdwatchers. Dr. George Roberston, Leslie Doke and Jimmie Harper to make occasional forays outside to enjoy God's creation.

One more GYN, three ENT and four general cases were completed before 1:00, then it was off to the chocolate farm for roughly half the crew.



(Megan Cannon with two patients who successfully charmed her heart.)

Following supper on Thursday evening, we covered a few travel details in anticipation of our R & R day in Antigua and began a time of sharing. Dr. Robertson described Clinica Ezell and these surgical teams as a *heavenly cocoon* another team member said it was her *sanctuary*.

If you are looking for a heavenly cocoon or sanctuary, please consider joining us next year and see your face in the 2018 June team photo.

