

Health Talents International

March 16-23 Eye and Orthopedic Surgery

Trip Participants: Ortho Surgeon: David Gilliam; Ortho Surgery Resident: Collin Bills; Ophthalmologists: Jim Loden, Emily Graves; Optometrist: Mardee O'Donnell; Anesthesiologist: William Weems; CRNA: John Anderson; Ophthalmic Scrub Tech: Mark Sloan; Surgical Tech: Richard Yates; ER MD: George Nobile; PA: Linda Elrod; NP: Laura Hitchcock; Pharmacy Student: Todd Garrett; RN: Connie Campbell; LPN: Sandra Yoder; CNA: Sarah Zook, Brenna Cosminsky, Crystal Atchley; Caregiver: Vanessa Gilliam; Lipscomb team leader: Alan Bradshaw, Kenneth Coca, Chaslynn McAvoy; Lipscomb Students: Maria Asencio, Vicky Bosse, Alex Bullington, Denise De La Torre, Erika Dore, John Michael Elder, Cory Ferguson, Ashley Guinn, Chloe Higgins, Kimberly Keen, Cindy Kershaw, Wynton Overcast, Annie Westrich, Zach Whiteside, Cameron Gilliam; HTI Team Leader: Julie Wheatley

Each time a large group comes to Guatemala with lots of supplies we hold our breath until the last person passes through customs without trouble. With a great sigh of relief all team members made it to Guatemala and passed with all luggage accounted for and no hold ups at customs. We were quickly loaded onto the bus and on our way to Clinica Ezell.

We arrived tired but excited to begin a great week. The surgeons headed off to clinic to see patients for the following day while the OR staff started familiarizing themselves with the equipment and supplies. The rest of the team worked to inventory all the supplies brought down in luggage. It was a big task but everyone pitched in and it was done quickly. After having a nice dinner of tacos we had a brief orientation and introduction time before heading off to bed.

Sunday morning we awoke to a beautiful sunny day. Breakfast was delicious and with full bellies the students gathered together as Dr. Gilliam and Dr. Bills gave them a talk about sterile procedure. It was a great learning opportunity for the students who would be learning to scrub in and also observing in the OR throughout the week.

As the meeting wrapped up it was time to head over to church with the Montellano Church of Christ.

Dr. Walter and nurse Rosario directed the hospital orientation time after church and then it was time for lunch and shortly thereafter off to the OR for day one of surgery. Our optometrist, Mardee, was



very busy all week with optometry patients, pre-op surgical patients and surgical consults for future trips. We were so thankful to have him join this team on short notice and would have been in a pickle without his skilled help seeing the large quantity of patients scheduled for the week.

The eye team in the OR had a nice patient load but thankfully weren't overwhelmed for the first day. Dr. Loden was able to spend some time explaining what he was doing during surgically to some of the students and also help Dr. Graves become more familiar with the surgical procedure used at Clinica Ezell for cataract extraction. The ortho team didn't have many cases on Sunday but had a bunch of patients they were able to help in clinic or were able to offer operations for the following day.

Surgeries went well and the team met together after dinner for a short devotional time led by Alan Bradshaw. Alan served as the team's head chaplain throughout the week. His skill at developing solid relationships and getting to know his students and other team members has impressed us year after year. This makes his devotional talks all the more meaningful as you can see so plainly the heartfelt nature of his messages. He also had several of the men on the team take a night to share some thoughts. It was nice to hear from Kenneth, Todd and Zach as well as Alan.

Monday morning rolled around and the team spread out in many different directions. Students were divided up between mobile medical clinics with Laura and George and our Guatemalan MD's and dentists, optometry clinic, Eye OR, Ortho OR, Recovery and with our community development program. We had a great day in surgery. The eye team worked long hours, they started operating on their first patient at 8am sharp and worked steadily until just before dinner time with a short break for lunch. The patients we see in Guatemala have much more advanced or mature cataracts than those most often see in the USA. Getting a rock out of a tiny slit in a piece of tissue paper without tearing the paper is a fairly good example of what these surgeons are able to do. Oh and did I mention that the rock is bigger than the slit and you are doing this looking through a microscope the whole time?! Whew!



The ortho room was interesting with arthroscopy cases going on. The ortho surgeons were able to help a numerous people throughout the week. They gave steroid injections to arthritic patients, operated on patients with meniscus tears, amputated a toe severely damaged

by gout and had one special case in addition to all of that. You will hear more about that special patient here in just a moment... Richard and Linda were the OR staff helping in the ortho room on Monday. They did a great job and made everything flow so smoothly. Richard being the veteran he is, helped get the arthroscopy tower up and running, and kept the surgeons working without any hick-ups. We were blessed to have him on the team and believed that God was truly looking out for us by providing such a skilled person when he was most needed. Linda did a great job rotating between OR and mobile medical clinics. She pitched in and helped where needed and brought her joy along with her!

In the recovery ward Connie took charge and helped train the LPN and CNA's under her charge. Sandra, Sarah, Crystal and Brenna did wonderfully caring for patients, giving pre-op eye drops and making sure our patients were loved on and comfortable. Marta, Dr. Nehemias' RN health promoter also helped care for patients since we were short handed for RN's among the USA team. She was a delight to work with and HTI is so grateful to have a skilled young nurse like her as a part of the team. Connie is an ortho RN so she was the perfect person to have recovering and caring for patients post-op. We love having her around and hope that she continues to join this team for years to come!

In the sterilization room Alan Bradshaw spent time learning a whole set of new skills he hadn't expected. He learned about how to sterilize in the big autoclaves, how to flash instruments in the small one and what to do with all that arthroscopy equipment! He didn't have the most enjoyable job but Alan really pitched in and helped keep things running with guidance from Richard along the way.



On Tuesday we started out the morning heading out in many different directions once again. The dental crew was excited to have a day out at mobile clinic. Several of the Lipscomb students were pre-dental so they jumped at the chance to spend quality time with Heidy and Margarita (the temporary dentists covering for Dr. Silvia Albizures while she is on maternity leave). Heidy and Margarita thoroughly enjoyed having these students with whom

they could share their knowledge and experience. Meanwhile Oscar and Obdulio our coordinators for the community development projects we run were out visiting families and working to plant seeds in a few raised bed gardens they had helped families to build. The students who joined them throughout the week enjoyed getting to see the village of La Fortuna and see the effort HTI is putting in to improve the living situations of families in that village. Oscar and Obdulio also enjoyed the chance to practice

their English as they have been taking classes for the last year or so and have greatly improved their English speaking skills!

Surgeries on Tuesday were smooth and trouble free. The eye team had found their groove. Mardee was still rolling through the patients all day long and scheduling those who were candidates for surgery for the following day. Tuesday was special because we had two very special patients arrive at Clinica Ezell this day. One was Catalina, a 94 year old cataract patient. She was thrilled to find out that we would operate on her after being turned away at several other places because of her advanced age. Catalina captured the hearts of many on the team when she shared a song with us saying that it was “the song God gave me”. Her words of faith and song of praise humbled our hearts and shined with the beauty of our most awesome and holy Father who does provide and protect.

The other patient who brought the team to their knees in prayer was Rosario, a lady in her early 50’s who had been hit by a car nine months prior to coming to us. At the time of the accident Rosario was taken to the national hospital and had two metal plates put into her left leg. Sadly the operation never healed properly and eventually the skin above her shin opened up and stayed chronically infected. Rosario came to the clinic with her x-rays and a prayer that we might be able to help cure her leg. She had been turned away from other hospitals and couldn’t afford a private surgeon but had heard that perhaps there was hope at Clinica Ezell. After much discussion among the surgeons, a call to our med/surg committee chair on the US board, and other team members it was decided that Rosario did



indeed need to have the exposed metal plate removed from her leg. Dr.’s Gilliam and Bills said that her leg had not been properly set when the metal plate was placed on it and thus had still not grown back together after 9 months (per the x-ray’s) but they stated that there was a small chance that there could be bone growth behind the metal plate which couldn’t be seen on the x-ray’s. Rosario was educated and told that she would have to be extremely careful about cleaning her wound every day and that there was only a small chance that her bone had grown back together and a big chance that she would have to go through another operation after healing from the first in order to place a bone graft on her tibia to promote it to grow back together properly. Understanding the risks and praying for a good outcome Rosario decided to go ahead with surgery and have her metal plate taken out and her wound cleaned.

Rosario was one of the first patients back on Wednesday for surgery. Through tears and prayers the team prayed that God would intercede for Rosario and surprise us all with a healing bone and a healthier leg than expected. Boy did God ever come through! Once Dr.'s Gilliam and Bills had the metal plate out Dr. Gilliam started to manipulate Rosario's leg to see if the bone moved or if it had grown together and in a surprised voice said "I think there is bone growth in there!" Joy filled the OR and the word quickly spread that God had answered our prayer and Rosario may once again be able to walk! Praise God and to Him be the glory!

Thankfully all other cases went well for both ortho and eye surgery on Wednesday and the eye team even finished up earlier than prior days so they got a bit of a break in the afternoon and went on a little walk through the village. Once they were back they got to talking about patients for the following day and decided to knock out one of their difficult cases for the following day. Back to the OR they went and in just a little while they were wrapping up feeling great about how their tough case had gone and expecting good vision for the patient the following day.

Our Anesthesia team with Dr. Weems and CRNA John Anderson was stellar, the best anesthesia set up we have had on an ortho team in a while. It was great to have two providers to care for our patients and a huge plus that John was fluent in Spanish. The two of them were enjoyable to work with and also served as great teachers for the students who shadowed them. Participating on surgical trips like this is always a great opportunity for students, especially when the providers like these guys take the time to teach and explain about what they are doing.

Wednesday afternoon several team members headed into Chicacao for a tour of town and some ice cream. On the way into town we stopped at the bridge built several years before by a Lipscomb engineering team. The little bakery that always gave the team bread was still there and they once again showed their generosity by giving the gift of delicious sweet bread to those who had gone to see the bridge. With smiles and goodbyes the team headed back to the cars and into Chicacao. Yummy ice cream was eaten and a few team members jumped in on some pick-up basket ball games in the town square. John and William, our anesthesia guys, were the tallest ones on the court!

During devotional time as the team discussed the events of the day Dr. Gilliam suggested that the group go and sing the Spanish songs they had been practicing all week with the patients in the ward. It was such a special opportunity to share with the patients. After singing most of the group split up to visit with and pray with the patients. One patient started asking questions and our recent Bennie McDonnell/Goddard scholar and new nurse, Marta, had the opportunity to witness and share about Christ with the patient. We were so excited to see the Holy Spirit at work!



On Thursday morning we said goodbye to Dr. Loden who was off to the coast for a fishing trip. Dr. Graves finished out the day's surgeries for the eye room and the ortho crew finished up their cases early and were able to have a relaxing afternoon. The Lipscomb students who weren't scheduled for surgery or mobile medical clinics did a HUGE favor for the HTI staff by going all over the hospital and cleaning the awnings over the windows. They were a little sun burned by the time they were done but knew that they had done a great service for those at the hospital.

That afternoon a group headed out to the cacao farm for a trip to see the natural beauty of Guatemala. They had a great time playing in the forest, taking pictures with the ceiba tree and eating fresh pineapple! Another bunch of team members made their way to the hot springs near La Fortuna. They played in the water a while and marveled over the fact that the spring was so hot it could boil an egg!

Thursday night the team had a lovely time sharing their stories from the week, talking about the ways in which they had seen God at work and processing what they had learned. Everyone headed off to bed late after a long devotional and many students staying up to play a thrilling round of signs.

Friday morning Richard, Mark and Emily had to head out for the airport so we said goodbye to them before loading the bus to Antigua. The day in Antigua was beautiful and everyone enjoyed hitting the market and playing in the pool. That night we gathered together for dinner at Hotel Antigua and shared a lovely meal at a long table. It felt like a feast!

Saturday morning there were two groups heading out for the airport. About seven team members caught a 4am shuttle to the airport and the rest loaded on to the bus at 9am. The roads were clear despite the parades all over related to Holy Week, so the team made it to the airport in plenty of time to catch flights.

It was another wonderful week blessed by God and his loving kindness.