

Health Talents International March Eye/Ortho Surgical Team 2018

Team Participants: Surgeons: Lee Coleman, David Gilliam, Anne Henzel, Zach Phar; Anesthesia: David Crasto, Sandra Lumby; Dentist: Bob Huffstutter; Physical Therapist: Joe Muchmore; Nurses: Connie Campbell, Hollye Clardy, Freda Fuller and Jessica Lovelace; Nursing Students: Collin Jenkins, Micaela Lewman, Shea Mincher, Tania Romero, Jena Starkweather; Surgical Tech: Judith Bonilla, Katrina Hess; Ophthalmic Assistants: Amy Coleman, Claire Coleman, Walker Coleman; Mission Intern: Evan Bridges; Sterilization: Cary Sills, ; Caregiver: Hannah White; ACU Faculty Leader: Anne Crane; ACU Students: Aidan Barerra, Riley Fortner, Katie Cordova, Maegan Holbrook, Micaela Janssen, Tyler Kastner, Chantal Kinsey, Katie Lawrence, James Loera, Seng Mahkaw, Elyssa Molina, Shelby Pelleran, Esme Rodriguez, Caleb Stone, Ashley Stucker, Sussan Talamas, Chase Van Riper, Destiny Wadewitz; Translators: Kathryn Chan, Manuel Guarcas, Rita Sills; Team Leader: Rick Harper

Life happens and if you are looking, God shows out!

Three days before our team was to assemble in Guatemala, our lone OR nurse, Leah Bradshaw, lost her father after he suffered a heart attack that same day. As our hearts grieved for Leah, who was no longer able to join us in Guatemala, we began praying and searching for a last-minute replacement. God showed out, sending us Judith Bonilla, a surgical tech and native Honduran who works in Nashville on Friday morning, less than twenty hours before our departure! Could we have asked for anything more?



(Judith with a few new friends.)

Our team hailed from Arkansas, California, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and Nicaragua, traveling by bus and three different airlines on five different flights. Only two, Dr. David Gilliam and surgical tech, Katrina Hess missed their flight that morning. They caught a later flight out of Little Rock, arrived in Guatemala City late Saturday and Dr. Walter Sierra brought them down on Sunday morning.

Travel to Clinica Ezell on Saturday was uneventful, though it proved to be a very long day with more than a thousand pounds of surgical supplies and medicines to unpack and inventory. Drs. Coleman and Henzel began consultations soon after unpacking their personal belongings, and a small army of ophthalmic assistants and students helped with vision checks and eye exams. All the while, orthopedic resident, Zach Pharr was busy with consultations of his own, working until 10 PM. Since Dr. Gilliam's flight was canceled, Dr. Pharr was a solo act that first night, and translator Manuel Guarcas labored with him, both smiling the entire time.

2018 brought a change to the worship time at the Montellano church, it now begins at 9 AM and concludes around 11. This allowed us conduct orientation, complete with introductions before lunch and still begin surgeries around 1:00 PM. Eight eye surgeries and two orthopedic cases were completed the first afternoon, and we're off to a good start.

Our devotional theme for the week was a challenge to make yourselves available with "Life Steady, Heart Ready, While Being God Fed & Spirit Led." That theme was introduced on Sunday night during a short period of worship, then it was time for prayer requests. Hector topped the list on Sunday, having a preliminary diagnosis of bone cancer, devastating news for a young man not yet in his teens. His father took the news hard and seemed unwilling to pursue treatment in Guatemala City. We committed to helping but, Dad kept coming up with more reasons it could not and would not work. Our prayer is three-fold, that Hector's father will find enough hope in the help we are offering to pursue treatment, and that Hector's cancer will be cured or better yet, not be cancer at all.

Dr. Bob Huffstutter, a veteran dentist nearing "groupie status", (Ten or more trips.) joined the March team for the second year in a row and will be returning for the second time this year in July. Monday would be the first day for dental work and Drs. Silvia and Manuela had patients lined up and ready for a master of dentistry. You'd be hard pressed to find a more gracious servant, fortunately for Health Talents, God shows off and sends such men and women to us on a regular basis. While Dr. Bob was plying his trade, our four surgeons were busy restoring sight to fifteen patients and mobility to four ortho patients.

We arose Tuesday morning with sixteen eye patients on the schedule and two ortho cases...big ones, ACL repairs. ACL repair is a whole new game, one requiring video cameras, surgical scopes and highly specialized equipment. Dr. David Gilliam, the pioneer of our orthopedic surgery, along with former Lipscomb Spring Break student, and now orthopedic surgery resident, Dr. Zach Pharr, were more than up to the task. Drs. Crasto and Lumby provided outstanding anesthesia care, and surgical tech, Judith Bonilla kept the room running smooth.

Wednesday would be our last full day of surgery, and the patient du jour was little David. Born blind with congenital cataracts, David had his first surgery in November. David ruled the recovery room with his charm and adoring father for three days. He bravely went back for surgery, though unlike the adult cataract patients, required general anesthesia. A light day in the ortho room, only one case, freed up our anesthesia team to assist with David's surgery.

(Amy Coleman, aka, the Delta Diva, was smitten by David and her husband, Dr. Lee Coleman's handiwork. I think David was a bit taken with Amy as well and I'm pretty sure God showed out.)



Eighteen received the gift of sight on Wednesday, along with the one orthopedic case, and all was going well until Sonia, a cataract patient for Dr. Anne Henzel's, suffered an apparent stroke and was unresponsive. We determined we needed to move Sonia to the local government hospital after consulting with her daughter, who seemed oddly unconcerned. She said this has happened before and her mother always wakes up...wish we'd known about this before now!

Sonia regained consciousness and when told we were moving her to another hospital, she refused to go, fearing she would die in their care. We kept her at Ezell for the night, keeping her on oxygen and monitoring her vitals throughout the evening. She was discharged on Thursday morning with instructions to seek further medical care, otherwise the next TIA may be a stroke from which she does not recover.

Ten more cataract surgeries were completed on Thursday, then it was time for lunch and an optional trip to the chocolate farm. We made ourselves available, and we hope God was glorified through our service. For certain, we were fulfilled and honored to reflect His glory.

