

HEALTH TALENTS INTERNATIONAL
General/GYN Surgery Clinic
October 1-8, 2011

Trip Participants: General Surgeons: Benny Cleveland, Lee Roberson; Gyn Surgeons: Ben Doke, Ana-Maria Gray, Helen Park, Belinda Pere; Anesthesiologist: Carlos Patino; Physicians Assistants: Ashley McDaniel, Allison Brown; CRNA's: Shelly Bazy, Jeff Cherye, Shannon Sexton; Student Physician Assistants: Elaine Brown; Student CRNA's: Rachel Boone, KeighAnn Gholson; Nurses: Audrey Ayres, Glenn Berkey, Neva Berkey, Ashley Brenna, Susan Brown, Connie Campbell, Tracey Cherye, Leslie Doke, Birdy Ebert, Linda Hamm, Jacqui Hurd, Whitney McMullan, Dawn Skinner, Janelle Sladek, Bonnie Spink, Micah Walden, Respiratory Therapist: Jacob Lough; EMT: Jamie Ebert; Pre-Nursing Student: Meredith Pheasant Chaplain: Jimmy Hyrd, Translators: Olga Brazzel, Amy Class, Geneveive Davila, Lucy Howard, Rosa Jenson; Sterilization Crew: Jacob Caddell, Brenda Grant; Compassionate Caregivers/Surgical Assts: Jane Dye, Adrienne Kenney, Joan McDaniel, Karen Morrison, Maklayla Samaras, Judy McWhorter; HTI Board Member: Cynthia Allen, Harriette Shivers; Team Leader: Rick Harper

The 2012 was quite large and with the ever changing flight schedules and airline mergers, we continue to adjust our plans. Our Sacramento, CA and Midland, TX travelers flew into Guatemala City on Friday and met the larger portion of the team on Saturday morning. Our Arkansas, Tennessee, West Virginia and Wyoming team members flew into Houston Friday to make sure they made the connection on Saturday morning. Everyone scheduled to be in Guatemala City on Saturday morning arrived and with their luggage. Dr. Helen Park would arrive on Sunday as planned.

Our bus trip to Clinica Ezell was uneventful, the best kind, and we arrived shortly after 3:30 PM and quickly began unpacking and sorting supplies. Due to customs policies in Guatemala, it is helpful to split up supplies among all of our team members and have them bring \$100-200 worth of medicines and assorted surgical supplies. Before we place those in our supply rooms, we must first take stock of everything and prepare a thorough inventory. This is quite a production with supplies split between more than forty travelers and takes the better part of the afternoon. While inventory is taking place, our anesthesia providers are taking stock of supplies and equipment and our surgeons are examining patients for their final preoperative consultation. Following supper, introductions and a brief orientation, we broke into meeting groups for our recovery room, OR and anesthesia.

Unlike Sunday morning in 2010, we woke up to running water and never suffered from any problems with the weather or our water supply. Dr. David Lux delivered the sermon during worship services with the Montellano church family. He talked about Moses and the number of times called God him, before Moses heeded the call and followed God's instructions.

We began surgery shortly after lunch and by 7:00 PM we had completed four GYN cases and four general surgery cases, off to a solid start.

Twelve patients were scheduled for surgery on Monday, but before the day was out we had operated on fifteen. Our OR teams were running smooth and we were able to add three patients to our docket that were scheduled for Tuesday. By Monday afternoon we became aware of a patient, Irma, who was struggling a bit with her recovery and in a tremendous amount of pain. Her vitals deteriorated that evening and though she did not lose much blood in surgery, she was clearly anemic and her hematocrit was low. A decision was made to get her a blood transfusion. The transfusion wheels began turning around 9:00 PM and a local lab crew came out to type, test and draw blood from several of our team members. Irma was scheduled to receive two units of blood and she received her first unit late that evening. However, she had a reaction to the transfusion and required some Benadryl and other treatments to stabilize her condition. The other bag was placed into storage in case we needed it later. Irma would eventually go home at the end of the week in good condition.



Every trip has at least one adorable child.

Tuesday began with great relief over Irma's improved condition and fifteen cases scheduled for the day. The day went smooth and all OR's were empty shortly after six PM. An early devotional seemed to be in order as we gathered for supper, but such was not the case. Within a few minutes, Dr. Ana Maria Gray rushed in to say that Marta, one of our patients from that day was in critical condition and we should consider moving her to the local hospital right away. Marta was quickly moved into OR 2 as we set it up as an ICU room, complete with defibrillators made ready. Quick action by RN, Tracey Cherye and CRNA's, Shannon Sexton and Jeff Cherye stabilized Marta long enough to determine that she was bleeding internally. She needed immediate surgery and four units of blood, so the lab was called once again. However, we could not wait and the unused bag from the previous night proved to be a lifesaver.



Prayer in action.

Within moments of opening Marta, an artery bleeder was identified and quickly closed as she received an initial unit of blood...the unit left over from Monday night. All eight of our surgeons were in the OR to assist and those on our team who were not involved with her care were praying and singing. Three hours later, with many of our team singing praises the entire time, Marta had received an additional three units of blood, essentially replacing 100% of our blood volume. Dr. Ben Doke later told me that Marta would not have survived a transport to the hospital in Mazate. *Marta would be moved to Mazate on Thursday evening to receive 24 hour care since our team was leaving on Friday morning.*

Her lab results were so improved on Wednesday morning that head nurse, Leslie Doke, ran from the recovery area to the dining room to share the news in disbelief. Dr. Belinda Perez would later say, "I do not come from a church background and until this week, did not believe in miracles...I do now." ***As of this writing, 10/10/2011, Marta has been discharged and is doing well.***

We only had six GYN patients and three general cases scheduled for Wednesday and it was a good thing since OR 2 was still serving as ICU room for Marta. The day went smooth as did the evening, a welcome change to the previous two nights. Cynthia Allen, Harriette Shivers and Judy McWhorter had traveled to Chichi the day before and were busy interviewing potential scholarship candidates and reviewing the grades and reports of current students. Before the week was out, they would meet with more than thirty students.

Thursday saw the departure of Dr. Benny Cleveland who needed to get home to care for his sweet wife, Becky. She requires twenty-four hour care due to a series of strokes in 2010 and Dr. Cleveland tries to balance his desire to serve with HTI and care for his wife of more than fifty years. Dr. Helen Park traveled with Dr. Cleveland for an early return as well. Dr. Lee Roberson was left with six general cases that day and finished those before noon and all who wished to make a trip to Lake Atitlan had a great trip that day.

With the exception of Marta who had been moved to Mazate the night before, all patients were discharged on Friday after an eventful week. Travel to Antigua went off without a hitch and all enjoyed a relaxing day with a few in the group finding the Mayan Spa for a little pampering.

Guatemala held one more tense moment for this group as the bus to the airport on Saturday morning failed to start once it was loaded. Multiple phone calls ensued with much help from some of our Spanish speakers, Cynthia Allen, Olguita Brazzel and Dr. Carlos Patino, and four shuttles arrived. This writer had left on an earlier flight and our board president, Harriette Shivers, coordinated this back up plan. Rumor has it, the shuttle travel was a bit comical, but all arrived at the airport in time and made their connections.

Thus ends the October 2011 surgical trip with all patients and all team members doing well. God provided us with an amazing team this week, all the talent needed, a single unit of blood for transfusion at just the right time and a new believer in miracles.