

Health Talents International

General and GYN Surgery

October 2019

Team Participants: Emergency Physicians: David Brazzel, Jasiri Kennedy; General Surgeons: Tony Fillmore, Glen Blue; OB/GYN Surgeons: Sunny Khurana, Ravi Nakrani, Mark Seaver; Anesthesiologist: Byron Brown, Cynthia Brown; CRNA: Jeff Cherye, Desiree Cherye; SRNA: Brianna Ortals; Surgical PA: Todd DeCarlis; Nurse Practitioners: Illa Cox, Kitty Lam; OR Nurses: Cassandra Hargrove, Jenni Prevatt, Susan Thomas; Surgical Techs: Erika Gaytan, Pamela Holliman, Kathy Jackson, Kimberly Rabe; Recovery RNs: Melanie Collazos, Emily Cook, Ann Cross, Emilia Del Rosario, Anna Diaz, Christin Dickison, Cecilia, Roger Graves, Desiree Gregory, Jacqui Hurd, Rosio Moreno, Melanie Obst, Linda Osborne, Aaron Redelsperger, Heather Shingleton; Lab Tech: Thomas McGinnes; Intake, Discharge: Rita Sills; Translators: Alyssa Barrundia, Olguita Brazzel, Oscar Calel, Daniela Rodas, Josefina Meerjanssen, Kim Steele, Mercedes Valencia; Caregivers: Fannie Amy, Kailyn Dabe, Jayla Kennedy, Karen Morrison, Yvonne Rodriguez, Allie Shingleton, Anne Wittenborn, David Wittenborn; Trip Chaplain: Dan Jocoy; Sterilization: Cary Sills; Trip Leaders: Rick Harper, Bode Teague

The trip began on Friday for most this year. More than thirty flew into Guatemala City on Friday night, half a dozen more flew into Houston on Friday in order to make the first flight out Saturday morning.

The Litegua bus was scheduled to go to the hotel first, no sense in such a large group shuttling via the hotel service and handling luggage twice. This was not our normal routine, and the bus driver ended up at the airport first, as was customary. Once we realized his error, thanks to an explosion of e-mails, texts and phone calls upon landing, we sent him to Hotel Barcelo. A minor hiccup, one that reconfirms the beauty of communication when all parties do it well.

We were able to get away from the airport at a decent hour and begin the slow trek through Guatemala City traffic and down the mountain to the coastal highway, CA1. Rain, road flooding and one large tree across the highway were additional impediments; turning a three-hour trip into more than four hours.

We had thirty-eight team veterans from Arkansas, California, Colorado New York, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and Washington. This made for a smooth arrival at Clinica Ezell; we quickly unpacked supplies, began consults and prepped the OR's for surgery on Sunday. Following supper and a housekeeping orientation, it was off to bed...coffee, eggs, beans and tortillas would be waiting when we awoke.

Guatemala does not practice daylight savings time as do most states in the US, thus a few team members struggled adjust their clock, internal and external, and awoke early on Sunday morning. An additional hour or two of sleep would be nice, but the cooler morning air, sunrise, sounds of the wildlife, and coffee, were worth it!

The eternal optimists in our midst, *surgeons*, had scheduled more surgical cases than we would be able to complete that afternoon. It would be amusing, and interesting, to start a team pool predicting the number of cases we'll actually complete once the schedule is posted.

We give them a hard time on occasions, smile to ourselves, all the while knowing it is their desire to serve that drives their optimism. We completed two GYN cases and eight general surgeries on Sunday, and all patients had a restful night.



(Christin Dickison, Pamela Holliman, Dr. Glen Blue, Kathy Jackson and Kimberly Rabe)

Monday would be our first full day of surgery, and the beginning of mobile medical and dental clinics for the week. Drs. David Brazzel and Jasiri Kennedy, along with nurse practitioners, Illa Cox and Kitty Lam traveled each morning with our coastal teams to various communities to provide primary care. (Rio Bravo, Xeyejup, Samayac to name a few.)

Optimism struck again on Monday, GYN had overscheduled for the day and would end up completing four surgeries, the norm we've come to expect for the women needing hysterectomies or the removal of cysts. Our two general rooms churned out fifteen more for the day, bringing out two-day total to twenty-nine...and our recovery room nurses surely noticed the uptick in patients coming out of the OR. Yet the smiles never ceased!



(Emilia and Desiree)

Twenty-one patients were scheduled for Tuesday, and we hit our stride on the second full day of surgery. Discharges were on schedule, patients and out team members were doing well. We were even able to go down to the recovery room that evening and sing to our patients following our devotional time.

Wednesday is normally a wind-down day, even if it is a full day of surgery. We try to schedule the more difficult cases the early part of the week and the wisdom in that practice was about to manifest itself with a couple of complications. Sixteen cases, four GYN and twelve general cases were scheduled for the day. One patient, Saenz, overweight and diabetic went into renal failure following a simple procedure and needed to be transported to a local hospital for ICU care and dialysis treatment. While her renal failure was not a complication from the surgery, we are grateful that she was in our care when it came to light. Saenz lives near the Pacific Ocean in the community of La Maquina, a finca (farm plantation in US speak) and would have been hours away from any medical care, much less having a team of physicians, surgeons and nurses at her bedside. *(She is doing fine by the way.)*

The week was coming to a close, we received a good report on Saenz Thursday morning and focused on the remaining thirteen patients on the docket. The OR's were empty by around 1:00 PM...temporarily. One of our GYN patients took a turn for the worse, even though she had been up and walking on Wednesday.

Back in the OR to address bleeding into her abdomen, two units of blood and all was well. Come Friday morning, she was ready to go home!

(Nurses, Anna and Heather)



Seventy-nine surgeries, all patients able to be discharged on Friday, wonderful day of leisure in Antigua and safe returns to the US. We give thanks to the Father for a wonderful week!

