

Health Talents International
September 1-8, 2018
General/ GYN/ Urology Surgical Mission

Trip Participants: *General Surgeon: Dave Mauterer; Pediatric Urologist: Gerald Jerkins; Pediatric Urologist Resident: Akram Assadi; OB/GYN Surgeon: John Kaczmarek; Resident OB/GYN: Kelli McEntee; Anesthesiologist: Sandra Lumbi, CRNA: Karen Hitesman, Dave Ratliff, Janet Sessums; Physician Assistant: Todd DeCarlis;; Certified First Assistant: Matt McMicken; RN Circulator: Susan Thomas, Samantha Pritchard; Uschi Hill; OR Scrub Nurses: Lesa Dale, Barbara VanBeckum; Recovery Room Nurses: Carol Angelo, Karen Baker, Taylor Deen, Elizabeth Donaldson, Lauren Moore, Cherie Morris, Becky Tilton, Jill Travis, Lyndsie Warren, Katie Welch, Sandy Wilkinson; Paramedic: Ken Earle; Lay Circulator: Terry Doughty; Translators: Alyssa Barrundia, Kathlyn Chan, Mafer Fuentes, Manuel Guarcas, Kimberly Wilson; Intake/Discharge: Rita Sills; Caregiver: Anna Travis; Mr. Fixit: Jaime Free; Sterilization: Cary Sills; Trip Chaplain: Howard Norton; Trip Leader: Rick Harper*

What a difference a year makes! In 2017 our team battled Hurricane Harvey as the trip began and Hurricane Irma upon completion. In 2018 the weather was delightful and did not impede our travels, it even went so far as to provide cooling rain showers most every afternoon and evening. Flights were mostly on time, we made it to Clinica Ezell before 5 and unloaded the bus just before the rains began.

Unpacking supplies, sorting, inventorying and patient consults were handled in short order, as were supper and orientation. The cool temperatures that evening made for a restful and peaceful night.

Sunday morning revealed the early risers and Dave Ratliff as the earliest. His next name tag may read "Disciplined Dave" as he was up before the sun, preparing himself and OR three each day. By seven that morning, most of our team arose from their slumber and made their way into the dining room for breakfast, the traditional eggs, beans, tortillas, fresh fruit and fresh juice...a great tradition. Worship service would begin at nine, so we had a little time to catch up on life with our trip veterans and get to know our first-timers.

Todd DeCarlis, also known as the Missouri Fly Caster, led a few songs in English, the ever-capable Josué in Spanish, while Alex delivered his well-prepared lesson. For those of you who've known Alex as our Director of Finance, you'll soon discover he is not only a capable leader in his new role as Director of Coastal Operations, but a gifted speaker and song leader in his own right. I am convinced that people tend to live up to expectations and Alex is certainly living up to the high expectations I have for him.

Our med/surg orientation began shortly after worship service, followed by a quick lunch and we were off. Three GYN cases, three pediatric urology cases and four gallbladders awaited.

Dr. John Kaczmarek returned for the second time this year, along with the duo of Lesa Dale and Terry Doughty. Resident, Dr. Kelli McEntee was also in their room along with Susan Thomas who was making her second trip of the year. California, Connecticut, New York, Tennessee and Texas residents in a single room, working together as a God-glorifying team to provide surgical care to seventeen patients. (If only our legislatures worked so well together.)

Berta Gonzalez would be the most challenging GYN patient for the week. We traded one unit of blood for a nine-pound cyst, so she is doing much better now!

One of our new anesthesia machines began misbehaving on Sunday afternoon, throwing first-time CRNA, Karen Hitesman, a real curve. She persevered as we assigned one person to assist her with manual bagging. Our new machines were purchased in Guatemala, all three are manufactured by Penlon and most importantly, serviceable by our supplier. Alex got on the phone with them and by Tuesday morning, the machine was repaired, reprogrammed and functioning as planned. Karen and those in OR 1 deserve a pat on the back for handling this with such grace.

OR 1 was good for seven gallbladder surgeries each day, Monday-Wednesday and three general cases on Thursday. Dr. Dave Mauterer and RN, Samantha Pritchard, made their second trip of the year and have settled into a committed routine of returning each April and September for the foreseeable future. An added blessing is Jamie Free, Samantha's husband of almost two years. Jamie is a "Mr. Fix-It," able to repair and tackle projects that require an extra measure of skill.

Dr. Howard Norton, PhD not MD, was our trip chaplain this week. Howard was a missionary in Brazil for more than ten years, president of Baxter Institute in Honduras and has been preaching for more than sixty years. His devotionals, stories and ability to speak English, Portuguese and Spanish made for a unique combination. Elizabeth Donaldson declared him to be her all-time favorite chaplain and our Guatemalan evangelists enjoyed a special treat visiting with him.

The pediatric urology team was made up of Drs. Gerald Jerkins and Akram Assadi, OR scrub nurse, Barbara VanBeckum and RN circulator, Uschi Hill. Not all their cases were pediatric, in truth some of their more difficult urology cases were adults. They provided care to twenty-three patients, none more special than Wilson. The next few paragraphs, all in italics, are written by Dr. Gerald Jerkins.

I am attaching a couple of photos that are likely not calendar quality but are meaningful to me...

One of our patients, Wilson, was 17 years old and has Cerebral Palsy, which in some cases traps a normal or near normal brain in a (frequently) contorted unattractive body. I noticed when we made rounds that his mother was with him all the time and very pleasant. Having taken care of a lot of special needs kids over the years, you can tell when these children are taken care of well. He was!

He did well with his surgery and when making rounds it became apparent that the medical team (me included) really liked to get photos with younger cuter kids. But we thought Wilson might want to be in a photo too and when we asked him and his mother, he did not hesitate to say yes and looked very happy. We were then able to discharge him home on Thursday.



Later that afternoon, near the front gate, I happened to see Wilson and his family preparing to go home. Mom and Wilson waved and smiled as I walked past them and once again they expressed gratitude. A few minutes later when I was on the road I looked back and saw his parents and brother pushing him in his wheel chair across the road to their pick-up truck. They let me take a photo as they lifted him, in his wheelchair, and secured him to the truck. Then waved as they drove off to go home in the hot afternoon.



When we want to talk about heroes and people to admire, it is this family (and the many others like them) who with the resources they have provide such loving attention to their son who cannot take care of even his basic needs...and have been doing this demanding job 24/7, 365 since he was born. Sometimes the ones we can learn the most from are the ones who we are not so easy to look at. I learned a lot from this family. Just wanted to share with you. Gerald Jerkins, MD

I am confident that Wilson's family would say our team was filled with heroes, heroes who would prefer to simply be known as servants.

I've not made mention of our recovery room nurses and translators yet, so let me add that Lauren Moore, our head nurse sent me a message saying she'd never worked with a better team...they were amazing. And our translators were indispensable.



The heroes, the servants from September 2018.