

Health Talents international
Orthopedic and Eye surgery/Lipscomb Spring break
March 13-21

Trip Participants: Orthopedic Surgeon: David Gilliam; General Surgeon: Kirby Sweitzer; Eye Surgeon: Lee Coleman; Optometrist: David Brown; Anesthesiologist: Al Jones; Nurses/OR Tech; Amy Smith, Amy Coleman, Laura Hitchcock, Katie Beth Gill, Erin Stanly, Ashleigh Klimek, Lindsey Bankhead; LU Team Leader: Alan Bradshaw, Clint Sweitzer, Esther Schara; LU Students: Katherine Connell, Preston Deatheridge, Julie Denney, Cameron Gilliam, Danielle Kelvas, Samuel Marcrom, Chaslynn McAcroy, Joseph Muchmore, Kaci Ross, Leah Scruggs, Erin Showen, Roxanne Spielvogel, Allison Scott, Christopher Sullivan, Michelle Roberts, Jacob Pannell, Sarah Riggs, Nicole Muszynski, Stephanie White, Stephen Gragg; Sterilization: Jonathan and Terri Clemens; Translator: Nadia Aguilera; Non-medical volunteers: Whitney Gilliam, Vanessa Gilliam, Madeleine Coleman, David Brown, Joshua Brown, Sandy Brown; HTI Team Leaders: Marie Agee, Julie Wheatley

This trip started off a little different because we had people coming into the country on three different flights. The first group arrived with Marie and the second group arrived with Rick. These two groups loaded up and Rick and his ACU students headed up to Chichi while the eye team headed down to Ezell. Julie and Nadia stayed behind to await the Lipscomb group. Their flight was delayed so once they arrived we loaded the bus and headed out as quickly as possible. We had a safe drive and got to Montellano just in time for dinner.

Saturday night we unpacked, gave a few quick orientation comments and planned to do our big orientation session before church the next day. The doctors saw a few patients for the following day and Dr. Coleman scheduled two surgeries.

Sunday morning we woke up and had some great black beans, eggs and plantains with fresh squeezed orange juice. After breakfast we held our orientation and then headed over to worship with the Montellano Iglesia de Cristo. Church was great, Dr. David Lux gave the message and both Carlos and Cameron Gilliam led songs. That afternoon Dr. Coleman and Dr. Gilliam began operating and seeing their patients for the following day. Dr. Brown screened patients while Dr. Coleman operated. The two made a great team and things were so efficient with the help of Dr. Brown. While the surgeries were going on the students who were not scheduled to be in the OR got to work painting. Headed up by Alan Bradshaw and Clint Sweitzer, they had huge buckets of paint and they spent hours painting the dining area, dormitory, and the dental clinic. One of the traits that continually stands out about the Lipscomb group is that they are servants. They come on a mission trip to work and they go for it whole heartedly. This team painted, washed all the mattresses from the recovery ward, and washed dishes every night after dinner, and counted thousands of vitamins and medicines into little 20-30 pill baggies. They were a blessing to so many and their hours of service doing some of the less desirable tasks saved hours upon hours of work for some of our staff members.

Sunday night we had our first devotional time where we sang some and Dr. Coleman led our devotional thought. We didn't have a designated chaplain for the trip so Dr. Coleman stepped in and served in that

capacity for us. He also had several other men from the team share thoughts; Mike Brown, Sam, and Blake. We were given a few minutes each night to talk about things that had happened that day. Those little stories and times to process our days were invaluable.

Monday morning started off busily. We had people going in many different directions doing tons of different things. Some nurses and students were scheduled for mobile clinics with Dr. Walter or Dr. David. Other students were scheduled in either the eye or ortho surgery rooms, with the nurses in recovery, or working with children at the local school. Dr. Coleman along with his wife Amy set in operating on cataracts and teaching students how to circulate and scrub. Most of the students were able to have a turn watching eye surgery and learning about eyes from either Dr. Brown in the clinic or Dr. Coleman in the operating room.

Dr. Gilliam had an OR full of eager learners as well. He had some interesting cases and was assisted by Dr. Kirby Sweitzer. One child had two overgrown toes that were amputated and there were a couple of cysts removed from elbows and wrists. The students in the ortho room were fascinated with this type of surgery and doctors Gilliam and Sweitzer were great teachers!

The group of students who worked with the school across the street was assigned the task of checking height, weight and vision for the whole school! Thankfully we had four days in which to complete this. Each morning Monday thru Thursday the group assigned to the school for the day headed across the street around 9am. The children rotated through different centers. Valarie and Stephen did wonderfully as they read (or had the children read to them) in Spanish. Madeleine and Whitney manned the coloring station and had a blast coloring and playing with the kids. The third station was where the students jumped onto the scale for their height and weight and then moved on to have their near and distance vision checked. Most of the team members were able to spend a morning at the school helping out. Even Drs. Sweitzer and Brown volunteered and wrote down all the vision check information for nearly 100 students each day! Everyone had a great time working with the children and the administrators at the school were grateful for our presence and said that we are welcome back any time.

On Tuesday the team once again went in all sorts of directions. Mobile clinics, dental clinic, eye surgery, school vision checks, everyone had a place to be and work to complete. The day passed by quickly. Dr. Coleman had nine cataract cases that all went very well. Jonathan and Terri Clemens worked quickly in the sterilization room and were always ready with clean sterile instruments each time the doctors were ready to start a new case. Sterilization was a new job for both of them and as Jonathan said, he was happy to learn something new and glad to be of service. Everyone was glad to have people as sweet and efficient as Jonathan and Terri taking care of the sterilization room!

Dr. Gilliam finished up all of his ortho cases on Monday and was able to go out to a mobile clinic with Dr. Walter on Wednesday. Nadia went with him to serve as his translator. It just so happened that one of the patients who came to clinic that day suffered from trigger finger. Dr. Gilliam let the patient know that her problems with her hands cramping up on her could be solved with a simple outpatient surgery and that her recovery would take no time at all. With Dr. Walter's approval and the patient's acceptance they put her on the surgical schedule for the following day. This is just another reminder that God is always at work, He sent this patient to clinic on just the right day!

Wednesday held another nine surgeries for Dr. Coleman, eight cataracts and one pterygium. He and Amy continued teaching the students scheduled to be in their OR about eyes, scrubbing for surgery, passing instruments, and circulating. The students got so much experience and learned lots during their time in the OR with Lee and Amy! A special team went out to clinic with Dr. Walter to do some vision checks for the children in Nanzales. They had several hundred children to check and had a very busy morning enjoying the children of Nanzales!

Some special mention needs given to all the nurses we had on this trip. Laura Hitchcock served as our head nurse and helped sort out the nursing schedule for us. She worked hard taking care of patients post-op and did a beautiful job. Our other nurses were such troopers staying up for night shifts to watch over the ortho patients, working in the hot recovery room during the day or helping out in the mobile clinics and teaching students as they went along. We couldn't have done it without them! Another person who deserves special thanks is our anesthesiologist Al Jones who came down to help knowing that we are still trying to grow our orthopedic clinic and that we wouldn't have a full week work of cases. The dedication to serving the kingdom of God that he and Dr. Gilliam have is truly remarkable.

Thursday was a lighter day for surgery. Dr. Gilliam took care of his trigger finger case first thing after breakfast. Dr. Coleman had three pterygium cases that went quickly. Around 9am a large group of team members left Ezell heading to San Lucas Toliman on Lake Atitlan. They spent a leisurely afternoon having lunch and swimming at the hotel there before returning to Ezell mid afternoon. Several people headed out to clinic with Dr. Walter and got the chance to hike up to the waterfall just outside of Xejuyup. The rest of the team headed out in the afternoon to visit the family of Don Augusto at the cacao farm. That group had a blast spending time with the family, seeing the enormous Ceiba tree, and eating all kinds of fruit. One of the men climbed several stories high into a mandarin tree to pick fruit for the group while some of the children climbed into the mango trees to pick green mangoes. The women cut the mangoes up, added some salt and lime juice to them and passed them around for the group to try. All team members had wonderful experiences in all the different places where they spent the day.

Devotional time that night was the traditional time of sharing. Several people were teary eyed as they talked about what an impact the week had on their lives. Many of the Lipscomb students had never traveled out of the country before so this trip was very eye opening and deeply spiritual for them. We all saw the thousands of ways in which God was at work and at the end of the day we were singing His praises.

Friday morning we woke up, had breakfast, took our group picture and headed out for Antigua. Once in Antigua we met back up with the ACU group and Rick. Everyone headed out on their own for lunch and spent the afternoon relaxing, shopping and enjoying the charm of Antigua. That night we met for dinner at the hotel. Not everyone had the same flight schedule so we said some goodbyes and said goodnight. The following morning we loaded the bus with most of the group and made our way to the airport. The team got off without any trouble and we once again thanked God for a blessed week.

By: Julie Wheetley

