

El Salvador Mobile Medical/Dental Team
May 13-18

Trip Participants: Physicians: Alan Boyd, Dave Darrah, Charles Jarrett; Dentist: Conrad Whitefield; Nurses: Rebecca Mitchell, Sheri Kretzschmar; Health Promoter: Gaspar Chan, Translator: Roger McCown; Deborah G. Rivas Scholars: Jennifer Sanchez, Raquel Melendez; El Salvador Facilitators: Adrian Larin, Marlene Larin; Team Leader: Rick Harper.

This was the first medical/dental team Health Talents had ever taken to El Salvador and we knew it would be a learning experience and would require an extra dose of flexibility with God's intervention. Discovering that we did not obtain permission to practice dentistry two days before departure was one such "flexible" moment. Nevertheless, our lone dentist, Dr. Conrad Whitefield, decided to come anyway and serve in any fashion. That should tell you a bit about the heart of Conrad and it was a heart shared by the rest of the team.

We had concerns over approval for the \$2,500 in medicine in our luggage as we did not receive permission until after we landed and made it through customs. Whew...one of the many occasions we believe God was preparing the way.

We got into Santa Ana and Hotel Tolteka around 5:00 PM and quickly set up a work station to begin counting pills and preparing for clinic the next day. Without any permanent team members in El Salvador, all of our supplies had to come with us and the many preparation details we take for granted when we take teams to Guatemala were left to this small team. Your report scribe, Rick Harper, left the pill counters to go purchase ice chests, tarp, plastic totes for pharmacy, beverages, ice and lunch supplies. By 7:00 PM, we were ready for the next day...and for supper.

Our first clinic was in La Reina, also known as Grecia, and we cared for thirty-six patients that day and we're off to a good start. For more details, please check the excellent blog by Sheri Kretzschmar. <http://www.sheriinguate.blogspot.com/>



Dr. Alan Boyd and nurse Sheri Kretschmar



Third year medical student, Jennifer and Gaspar Chan

On Sunday, we went to worship with the Ciudad Real church family, about twenty minutes from our Hotel, enjoyed lunch with several of our brethren from the Ciudad Real and La Reina church families before having a fairly relaxing afternoon.

We headed out for El Turin on Monday morning and found several church leaders busy preparing to host us. The building was small, but thanks to a few other buildings towards the front of the church property we were able to set up a highly functional clinic. Pharmacy was located towards the entrance, prayer station across from the pharmacy and consultation stations down the hill inside the church building. (Complete with ceiling fans which made HTI Board Member, Dr. Boyd very happy.) We saw sixty-one patients today, a good increase over Friday and things went very smooth.



Dr. Darrah with the help of translator and second year medical student Stephany Gutierrez.



Dr. Jarrett with translator Roger McCown.

Roger is also an HTI Board Member and former missionary to Guatemala.

We returned to Hotel Tolteka for supper and a review of plans for Tuesday. We would be going to two locations, El Refugio and Ciudad Real, thus we must divide up our team. Once those clinics were complete, we would head to San Salvador and our host hotel for our final night near the airport...everything must be packed and ready to go on Tuesday morning.

Our two clinics on Tuesday were only 10-15 minutes apart and since both locations had advertised “dermatology” service, we shuttled patients to and from the clinics that day. Both communities were well prepared and though our clinic time was abbreviated, we saw more than eighty patients by noon. A good ending to a new venture!



The sweet face for the day...Sophie!



Dr. Conrad Whitefield is wearing the blue shirt in the middle. Though a dentist in the US, Conrad worked in pharmacy all week long.

We learned a great deal on this trip and we were truly blessed by the help of Sheri and Gaspar who made a bus trip from Guatemala to help us out.

Time will tell if we expand into El Salvador with a permanent presence and full-time team members. For now, it is safe to say that we will return to cultivate church relationships and to seek partnerships. With three students on scholarships studying medicine and nursing, we are laying sound groundwork. We met other Christian healthcare providers and students while we are there and it is clear that El Salvador possesses the human resource we hoped to discover.

The headlines in the paper the day we left declared a national crisis as the hospitals have no medicine and will be out until June or July. For more almost two hundred patients, Health Talents was the answered prayer last week!