

**Health Talents International
Harding Spring Break Trip March 9-16
Chichicastenango, Guatemala**

Trip Participants: MD's: Eric Dahl, Dannie Middleton; PA-C: Gary Hill; PA Students: Jamie Bryant, Lauren Bump, Joe Calderon, Chris Dahl, Sean Driggers, Rachel Fritsche, Drew Harper, Amanda Hartman, Whitney Kiihnl, Arianne Krulish, Christal Scott, Hannah Sutton, Sarah Tipton; Pharmacy Students: Alyssa Laurich, Alicia Simpson, Hye Jin Son; PreMed Students: Chibuzo Eze, Nnaemeka Eze; Team Leaders: Rick Harper, Julie Wheatley

Spring Break travel always requires a bit more flexibility than other times of the year. For the 2013 team, our schedule had a few advantages. Most of the team flew out of Little Rock on Saturday evening and made it into Guatemala...with luggage and to Hotel Barcelo for the evening without incident. No 6:00 AM flight for this group! Three in our party flew out of Atlanta and arrived midday and spent Saturday afternoon relaxing and awaiting our arrival. Of course, we did note that our Atlanta party chose not wait up for us!

We gathered together on Sunday morning for breakfast, packed up and hit the road for Chichi shortly after 8:00 AM. The ride was peaceful, traffic light and we arrived shortly before noon at Hotel Santo Tomas. The noon buffet was calling our name so we quickly moved luggage into our rooms before enjoying a meal together and setting out to explore Chichi on market day.



After a few hours of shopping and relaxing, we met for an orientation period, then walked to the HTI office to claim t-shirts and bags before joining the Chichi church family for a couple of hours of worship. Following a late dinner, it was off to bed.

Monday morning the team gathered for an early breakfast and welcomed the arrival of HTI's highland ministry team. This was to be a week of ABC clinics, both medical and dental. And while other patients were seen, our focus was on wellness checkups and education. Two teams headed to Joyaba before splitting up, with one team going to Xejoj and the other to Chuchuca. A third team, much smaller in size, saw patients at Clinica Caris.

Xejoj and Chuchuca are only accessible in the dry season and those who made the trek understand why. It takes a good two hours to make the trip and if not for the extra healthcare providers on these teams, the clinics would take two days instead of one. Even then it is a long day.



(Sean assisting with teeth cleaning and Jamie communicating...

via demonstration in the photo below.)



Upon our return to Hotel Santo Tomas, Hannah Sutton received the news that her brother Seth had been placed in ICU in Little Rock and the decision was made to schedule her for a return flight to the states on Tuesday. Rick Harper would travel with her and insure she made her connections and return to Chichi on Tuesday afternoon.

Due to the length of the day, a late supper and a desire to get the dust out of our clothes, hair and ears, we decided to forgo our normal devotional and meeting time. Prayers were lifted on behalf of Hannah and Seth and it was time for lights out.

Rick and Hannah headed out Tuesday morning and we broke into three teams, traveling to Xepocol, Patzite and Mactzul 3. Hannah made it safely to Little Rock later that evening and Seth was released from the hospital the following week after being diagnosed with a stroke.

All three teams had good days and we began to hit our stride with dental and personal hygiene education. As part of their ABC checkups, the children were required to demonstrate they knew how to wash their hands and brush their teeth properly. Since many of the children spoke very little Spanish, much less English, it took some time to learn the proper phrases and demonstration techniques. Once the children completed their checkups and visited the pharmacy, they were directed to the pila. (Guatemala's answer to a triple sink.) Once there, the children washed their hands and cleaned their nails to the satisfaction of the inspecting student. Afterwards, a few cc's of water, colored with purple food color was injected into their mouths. After rinsing, the children must brush until their teeth are pearly white and all food color is gone.





Kemmel decided to break tradition and venture into the unknown on Wednesday by breaking the group into five teams. We would hold ABC clinics in Mactzul 1, Mactzul 6, La Palma and Xepol, while a dental “only” clinic was held in Chimente. Outside of leaving one box of pharmacy supplies at Clinica Caris, things went off without a hitch. The Mactzul 1 clinic team shared their pharmacy supplies and we were able to cover the needs for Mactzul 6.

Our final day of clinic was Thursday and we returned to a more traditional format and broke down into three teams. One team remained in Chichi, one went to Clinica Caris and team three went to Mactzul 2. By the end of the week, more than three hundred children received the medical and dental checkup and the Harding students saw firsthand how basic care and education impact the lives of a child. Children from communities where we’ve had the program for many years were noticeably healthier than those where ABC was relatively new. The more mature communities had children whose weight was higher, the children were taller and their teeth had fewer cavities...all signs of improved nutrition and personal hygiene.

Following dinner on Thursday, we enjoyed our final devotional together and shared some of our memories for the week. A few shed tears, a few fought them back and hearts were refreshed. We serve an awesome God and when we are busy serving others, not ourselves, we are a better people.

On Friday morning we traveled to Antigua for a day of R & R. Everyone enjoyed a perfectly beautiful day in Antigua walking around in the market, going bike riding and navigating the cobblestone streets. We enjoyed another meal together at Hotel Antigua and prepared for an early departure, 3:45 AM, for the return trip to the airport. Flights were smooth, though three in our group were held up in US Customs. Hye Jin is from Korea, while Chibuzo and Nnaemeka are from Nigeria. The line for US visitors was longer than others, thus they missed the connection to Little Rock. Nevertheless, they did make the next flight and were safely in Searcy that evening.





(The extended arms are holding spots for Hannah, who had to leave us early
...and Jesus, who never leaves us!)