

Health Talents International
April 13-20 General/GYN/Urology Surgery Clinic

Trip Participants: Family Practice: Brian Cress; General Surgeon: Benny Cleveland, Ed Grogan, Eric Grogan; Urologist: David Freidberg; GYN: Ana Maria Gray, Melissa Brunner; Anesthesiologist: David Dahl; Dentist: Gerard Cascio; CRNA: Jan DeHaven, Duane Gill, Tiffany Horton; PA's: Jonathan Clemens, Terry Finley, Tim Thurston; RN's: Lisa Barte, Kim Chester, Melody Combs, Yvette Cooper, Rachel Doss, Christine Durbin, Lynn Freese, Kim Grewelle, Betsy Keene, Haley Key, Marcy Long, Janeen Masker, Shirley Peters, Mary Roseman, Rena Turner, Jamie Worton; Dental Hygienist: Elyse Cascio; LPN's: Mike Caldwell, Jean Walton; CNA: Terri Clemens; Translators: Manuel Guarcas, Maria Mercedes; Caregivers: Kara Cascio, Brenda Cascio, Samuel Clemens, Brenda Grant, Trevor Horton, Rachel Skinner; Marriage and Family Therapist: Klay Barte, Justin Moore, Laura Nicholas; Sterilization: Debbie Derenburger, Carolyn Grogan, Lynn Himelrick, Richard Yates; Team Leader: Rick Harper

If I were superstitious, I wouldn't say these words much less put them in print...all of our luggage arrived for the fourth time this year! We arrived on three different airlines, four different flight schedules and everyone arrived on time. Maria Mercedes, a volunteer translator from Antigua and first year medical student met us at the airport and what a blessing she proved to be. We were loaded and ready to head out from the airport by 2:30 PM and though traffic was a bit congested, we still made it to Clinica Ezell by 5:30 PM. We had plenty of time to inventory all of the supplies we brought down, though it is a bit chaotic for the first hour, saw all the patients needing surgery on Sunday and settled down for supper and a short orientation meeting. Then it was off to bed since many of us had been up since 3:00 that morning.

We awoke to the sound of tortillas being patted out for grilling and the sight of black beans, eggs and fried plantain, our breakfast staple most days. Following a leisurely breakfast, catching up with old friends and making new ones, we joined the Montellano church family for worship. Carlos, our Director of Coastal Operations was preaching that morning and was good enough to share his lesson in English and Spanish. After a couple of hours worshipping, we walked back across the road for our primary orientation with Dr. Walter Sierra and nurse, Rosario Poncio. A quick lunch and we were off and running with two gall bladder cases scheduled, two GYN cases, one urology and three generals. A good first day!

Manuel Guarcas, a linguistically gifted merchant from Chichiacastenango joined us this week. Manuel spent several years in the US, but Chichi is home and he operates a vendor stall in the local market. His first language is Quiche, second is Spanish, third...English as well as a little German, Italian and French. Manuel proved to be invaluable in translating throughout the week, much like Maria Mercedes. Their assistance with patient consultations helped our surgeons understand the needs of our patients and allowed our English only speaking members to better express themselves and calm our patients.

Our marriage and family therapist had a couple of private counseling sessions on Sunday afternoon and prepared for the grief-counseling seminar on Monday. The seminar would prove to be a slam dunk and one couple who had received marital counseling a few years ago, returned to let Klay Bartee know that they were still together in large part due to the counseling they had received from him with the help of translators.

We had a full schedule on tap for Monday and it would prove to be a bit ambitious as we ended up moving a few patients to the next day when it became clear we could not complete surgery at a decent hour. Everyone comes down to work and they are willing to work hard and work late. However, late nights place a strain on our recovery room crew, our patients and eventually everyone on the team. Even with moving a few patients to Tuesday, we still finished around 8:00 in one room and had we not moved those few, it would have been much, much later. We completed four gall bladder cases on Monday, four GYN cases and eight general cases. No one had trouble sleeping Monday night and Rick kept the devotional brief.

Dr. Brian Cress, a pediatrician from Minnesota was on this team and while he has worked with us in the highlands, this was his first time on the coast. He and Spanish speaking PA, Terry Finley took turns going out on mobile clinics with Drs. David, Nehemias or Walter throughout the week. Most days, one-two others on our team traveled with them and saw first-hand what medical evangelism is all about!

Rick posted some OR deadlines on Tuesday morning. If a GYN patient was not in the OR by 4:00 PM, they'd be moved to the next day, gall bladders by 4:30 and general cases by 5:00. Those timelines were well received and brightened the day for many. Two OR's were complete around 6:00 PM and one closer to 7:00 and we still provided surgical care to seventeen patients. Supper time was a bit more relaxing with more time for fellowship that evening. Rick provided another devotional and wove part of the Health Talents story into his thoughts. The team had enough energy to go across the walkway to the recovery area and sing to our patients that evening. We provided an encore performance on Wednesday. Praising God in song will always lift hearts, both for the singers and those listening.

Wednesday morning found our Marriage and Family Therapy crew in Chichi for a second round of counseling and a grief counseling seminar while our surgical team was preparing for the eighteen cases on our schedule. By the end of the day, we had completed four more gall bladder cases, three GYN and eleven general cases. All surgery was done by 6:30 with two rooms empty by 6:00. We were able to start our devotional a bit earlier and allow time for Rick to cover the schedule for the remainder of the week. Rick, along with Tiffany and Trevor Horton were leaving on Thursday. Tiffany had a commitment to honor with her daughter and Rick was traveling to Indianapolis for a Health Talents board meeting.

Eight general cases were scheduled for Thursday and our GYN crew completed four colposcopies and we ended the week with seventy-two cases. Everything went smooth with surgeries ending around noon and two different groups on the way, or returning from Lake Atitlan. Then we had an unwanted surprise!

Laura Chapeton, a diverticulitis surgical patient from Tuesday experienced a spike in her blood pressure and apparent stroke mid-afternoon and was transported to the national hospital in Mazatetenango. As you might imagine, prayers were be lifted in unceasing fashion. Gratefully, Laura was released from the hospital on Monday after her sodium and potassium levels returned to normal along with her blood pressure. She expressed her gratitude for the loving care she received and all those who prayed for her.

Dr. Walter Sierra reported this afternoon that all patients returned for the post-operative exams and had excellent evaluations. God be praised!

***RN Marcy Long is pictured below with one of our special patients. He had surgery on Sunday and went home on Monday, then returned the next three days to pray with the other patients.
Wow!!!!***



Jeronimo, a former Mayan priest, now a young Christian apparently trying to suppress a smile in this photo with Klay Bartee. Jeronimo recently lost his wife and Klay was able to provide some grief counseling and renew a friendship that began last year.





The April 2013 team.

(Tiffany Horton, Trevor Horton and Rick Harper not pictured.)