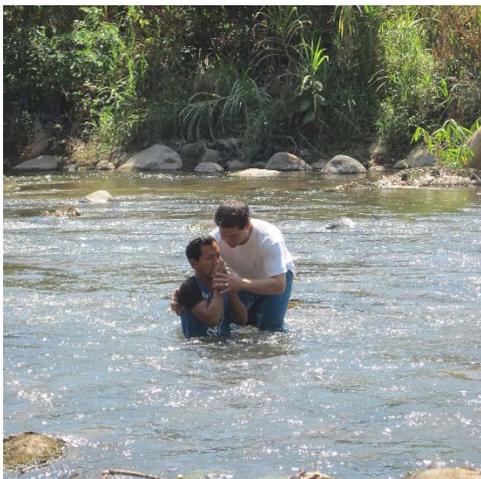


Health Talents International Guatemala GYN/Plastic Surgery Team February 7-14

Trip Participants: Plastic Surgeon: Dwayne Lett, Michael Hueneke, Phillip Strawther; OBGYN: Mark Kellum, Rusty Ethridge, Roy Kellum, Jud Allen; Pediatrician: Katy Farrell, Sarah Strange, Donna Lett; Pre Med Intern: Chloe Higgins; Anesthesiologist: Jon Bennie, Jeff Bennie; CRNA: Tamera Cameron, Karen Parrick; OR Scrubs and Circulators: Jan Harper, Connie Green, Lisa Cantrell, Misty Vance, Julia Zaitsev; RN: Nancy Bennie, Ann Cross, Lyn Dobyms, Val Ethridge, Kasey House, Joy Kellum, Nancy Morris, Linda Osborne, Brenda Robinson, Joani Stewart, Molly Vandiver; Harding RN Student: Josh Mann, BreAnn Mundy, Azel Peralta, Marisa Podolak, Olivia Ross; Compassionate Caregivers: Rita Benson, Jeff Dobyms, Pat Dwyer, Janice Grant, Jay Green, Susan Kellum, Allie Osborne, Kayla Robinson, Mikayla Stallings, Marjorie Strawther, Marilyn Swing; Trip Chaplain: Ben Fike; Translator: Drew Bennie, Cynthia Brazzel, Kristi Burns, Laura Fike, Tom Grant, Amy Mendez, Rita Sills; Sterilization: Alfred Anderson, Doyle Robinson, Jay Green, Cary Sills; Team Leader: Julie Wheatley

Our February surgical team felt like it was a breeze getting into Guatemala and through customs this time around. All flights were on time and all luggage was accounted for. RN Julia Zaitsev got the “special” treatment upon her arrival. Apparently there aren’t too many Ukrainian’s who travel to Guatemala so they pulled her into a little room to ask a few questions before approving her visa. Julia said they were very nice to her and who could blame them after meeting such a sweetheart! The team was loaded onto the bus fairly quickly and hit the road for Montellano.

Late Saturday night Carlos and Silvia’s son Dante was taken ill with respiratory issues. Thankfully Dr. Katy Farrell and RN Sheri Kretschmar were there to step in and help treat him until he could be taken to Guatemala City for further testing the next morning. Dante was diagnosed with a bacterial infection and placed on medicine and was back at Clinica Ezell a couple days later riding his bike and playing as if nothing had happened at all. Carlos and Silvia were thankful for the prayers of the team for their sweet little guy and all were thankful to our Heavenly Father for restoring him to good health.



On Sunday we were blessed with a most happy surprise when one of the Montellano Church of Christ’s young men, Carlos Getella decided to take on Christ in baptism. This surprise was all the sweeter for Linda Osborne who has been Carlos’ ABC sponsor for many years. Madrina (sponsor) and child made their way down to the river along with Carlos’ proud grandfather Jose Getella, a gardner at Clinica Ezell and the rest of the congregation. A short river side service was held and Carlos was baptized by Carlos Baltodano. This was a heartwarming way to start out a week of sacrificial service to the Lord.

Surgery began on Sunday for the GYN crew while the plastics team screened patients all that afternoon. Nurse Sheri Kretschmar had a number of children with her who had been referred to have surgery for cleft lips and palates from another organization in Guatemala. Sheri was sad however that there were fewer babies than in years past. She told a funny story of how she recently uncovered why there were fewer babies.

Apparently the social worker in charge of the babies was referring them to a clinic in Antigua instead of sending them to HTI. This social worker moonlights as a clown and decided he liked accompanying the babies to Antigua so he could hit up the clown store while in town! We all got a good laugh out of that story and look forward to having more babies in coming months as this social worker has been instructed that the babies will no longer be sponsoring his “clowning around”.

When Monday rolled around things went into full steam ahead both in the OR and on mobile clinics. Drs. Katy Farrel, Donna Lett and Sara Strange teamed up to tackle all sorts of pediatric patients in Rio Bravo alongside Dr. Walter Sierra while the OR teams got things rolling. We had a successful day in the OR and wrapped up in time for a nice dinner and devotional time with chaplain Ben Fike bringing a message to us out of the book of Mark. After the long day we were tired and quickly headed off to bed.

Tuesday was a full day of surgery in the OR and also saw many people heading out to mobile medical clinics. The recovery ward nurses and Harding students had their hands full on Tuesday with lots of patients in the ward from the previous two days as well as the new ones coming back from surgery that day. Thanks to the Meadowbrook Church of Christ there were new patient monitors for the immediate post-op area. The nurses were in love with those new monitors and asked for more! Slowly but surely a couple more will make their way to Guatemala in coming months to give us a total of five at Clinica Ezell.



For several years now HTI has maintained a great relationship with the Harding University College of Nursing. This year was no exception. Josh, BreAnn, Azel, Marisa and Olivia worked hard, pitched in and helped wherever they could with a hunger for learning and compassion for the patients. They were seen cleaning up after nauseous patients, scrubbing in and assisting in the OR and taking vital signs out at mobile medical clinics. We hope that in years to come many of the skilled and talented Harding nursing graduates will continue to express their love for Christ on mission trips to Guatemala and throughout the world.

On Tuesday evening a few of the team members had cooked up a surprise for team leader Julie. Julie is to be married in late March and the team decided to get together and shower her with love before her big day. They surrounded her in prayer and then had her attack a Smurfette piñata with all her might. Much to her surprise there was more than candy in that piñata but also a generous gift from the whole team! Julie was so grateful and felt very blessed by the love from this Feb surgical team.

After the piñata festivities we started devotional time. That evening we were one team member short as Jeff Dobyms had to return to Nashville earlier that morning. Although his time in Guatemala with us was short it was filled with lots of activity including time observing plastic surgery, seeing a bit of the mobile clinic at Rio Bravo and playing basketball! Jeff wasn't the only one to depart early. Wednesday morning we said a sad fair



well to Philip and Marjorie Strawther. The ladies in the recovery ward were especially sad to see Mrs. Marjorie leave, who would fill her place leading the conga line around the ward?!

Thankfully Wednesday was another smooth day in surgery and the mobile medical teams also enjoyed nice weather at clinics. It was an unusually rainy week for February so the cooling rain was a welcome reprieve to the heat of the Boca Costa. That evening the team sang several songs together

with the help of Brother Josue from the HTI staff. Josue led several songs in Spanish before the team made it's way down to the ward to serenade the patients in their own language. We sang and then divided up to pray with each and every patients in the ward. Of all the nights we spent worshipping our

King together this week, all would agree that Wednesday night singing and praying with our patients was the best of all!

Thursday was a light day for surgery with a few colposcopy cases for the GYN team and several smaller cases for the plastics team. A majority of the team was able to make their way up to the beautiful San Lucas Toliman to get a glimpse of Lake Atitlan and spend a relaxing afternoon in the cool mountain air. Dr. Nidian Patricia had a meeting to attend on Thursday so the “Pediatrix Angels” took over her clinic and saw patients in her stead. They were a little intimidated when first asked to cover and treat not only children but also (yikes!) ADULTS!!! Their week of mobile medical work had successfully prepared them to handle the clinic along with the ever competent health promoters and evangelists which make up Dr. Patricia’s team.

Later that night the team gathered around the fountain to have a time of sharing and caring. Everyone shared and expressed love for Christ and love for serving the people of Guatemala. All together we had treated 20 plastic and 35 gyn patients, all to the glory of God.



Friday morning we gathered together for one last breakfast at Clinica Ezell before hitting the road for Antigua. The group enjoyed the sunny weather in Antigua taking in the sights, markets and for several the spas! Dinner that night at the hotel was enjoyed by all and Saturday morning we loaded onto the bus and made our way to the airport. God watched over our group and our patients every step of the way, may the glory be His!

Written by: Julie Wheatley, Mission Trips and Events Coordinator for HTI