

HEALTH TALENTS INTERNATIONAL

Surgery Clinic Trip Report

June 1-8, 2019

Team Members: Surgeons: Drs. Stephanie Cross, Charles Gross, Ben Doke, Maggie Landwermeyer, ***Claudia Nieuwoudt***; Anesthesiologist: ***Drs. Susan Parmele, Ashish Shah*** and Joey Tilton; CRNA: Ken Beach; Physician: Dwight Sutton; Nurses: Mike Caldwell, Jeanie Damren, ***Marijo Dimora***, Leslie Doke, ***Hailey Goodin***, Christy Hallock, Brooke Hutson, ***Jennifer Littleton, Lindsey Orth***, Georgia Smith, Rachel Reiboldt, Susan Thomas, Becky Tilton, ***Nikki Trimm, Jala Verner***; Surgical Techs: ***Hannah Peets, Jovonne Frazer***; Nursing Students/CNA: ***Raven Crook, Charlene Ohl, Bethany Reed, Kylie Chaffin, Erin Foris and Kenzie Minor***; Lay Circulator: Emily Brammeier; Sterilization: ***George Brammeier***, Cary Sills; Caregivers: Tami Beach, Callie Doke, Joel Doke, Savannah Forren, ***Taylor Gish, Maria Herrera***, Kay Reiboldt, ***Ashley Sims, Shelby Sutton, Ashlyn Tilton*** and Faith Tilton; Translators: ***Daniela Almendarez***, Thiago Brito, Katie Berube, Mafer Fuentes, Edgar Lucero, ***Gabriela Martinez, Deanna Rangel, Daniela Rodas*** and Rita Sill; Trip Chaplain: ***Allen Diles***; Trip Leader: Rick Harper.

(First timers listed above in bold, italics.)

We tried something a bit new this trip, the second time we've done so, and it worked quite well. Several on our team arrived Friday night and were scheduled to wait until around 2PM before returning to the airport to catch up with the Saturday travelers. Instead of waiting, we sent a van to Clinica Ezell that morning and they were able to begin seeing patients three hours earlier. This made for a much smoother evening when the bus arrived around 6 PM.

Even though most flights were mostly on time, we did have a first. One of our first-time volunteers arrived on an early flight and ended up on the wrong bus leaving the airport...and with the wrong surgical group. We noticed she was missing, tracked her down and sent a pick-up to rescue her and bring her to Ezell. I've led almost 200 trips with more than 8,000 volunteer team members and hope this is the only time we encounter that drama. And to top it off, the bus hit the underpass coming out of the airport parking garage and damaged the A/C, making for a warm ride to the coast. Life is interesting!

Our later than traditional arrival made for a late supper and abbreviated orientation as we dispensed with introductions. That could wait until Sunday morning!

Eggs, beans, fresh squeezed juice and tortillas were on the breakfast menu and would be on five of our six days at Ezell. We did have pancakes twice, but the eggs were an everyday occurrence. Protein to start each day.

Dr. George Robertson was unable to join us this year, a recent cardiac event kept him in Lebanon, TN under the care of Mrs. Linda. He was missed. Dr. Charles Gross returned and brought two nurses and his surgical tech, Jovonne Frazer with him. Jennifer Littleton, Nikki Trimm, Jovonne and Dr. Gross represented Tuscaloosa in fine fashion that week. We're counting on them returning in 2020.

Our two GYN rooms and one general surgery room cranked out ten cases on Sunday, a great start to what would be a great week. Dr. Allen Diles, former missionary to the Czech Republic and current professor of theology at Harding University served as our trip chaplain this week. He treated us to rich, practical and insightful lessons all week long.

Dr. Dwight Sutton, a former MET student, now an internal medicine MD, joined us after being away more than twenty-five years. His mother, Fran, served on our board for many years and passed on the legacy of service to her children and grandchildren. Three of her children, Lori, Leslie and Dwight, as well as five grandchildren have come to serve with Health Talents. Dr. Sutton went out to mobile clinics each day beginning Monday and even had the chance to mentor a few students from our 2019 MET class.

(Rachel, Jennifer and Nikki, three of our slow-talking southern June nurses. Georgia and Alabama got along just fine this week.)

Photo credit for the photo on the next page, as well as the sentiment expressed by Rachel Reiboldt.

I love this picture because it shows what a team effort it is to make these surgical trips successful. Anesthesiologists, surgeons, OR nurses and techs, recovery nurses, caregivers, translators, and on and on. I'm always amazed at how a hugely diverse group of 60+ people from all over the US come together and work so fluidly for the common good of these incredible patients. They are so grateful and appreciative before we even start their surgeries...a simple reminder of why we chose careers in medicine.





Monday found us with eight GYN cases and seven general cases, a pretty full schedule and our patients did quite well. One patient, Ylemi, was identified by Marta Poncio, one of our three professional nurses on staff. Ylemi had come in for a pap smear and Marta noticed some abnormalities during her exam. The pap results showed nothing irregular, but Marta was convinced we'd received false test results. She persisted and convinced Ylemi to come in for a consult with our GYN surgeons. She did indeed have cancer and her surgery was successful and in time. As Dr. Maggie Landwermeier stated, "Marta is saving lives."

Tuesday was our most productive day in numbers, nine GYN and eight general cases, followed by six GYN and general cases on Wednesday. The week was sailing by!

In the good ole USA, this was national nurses week and we wanted to provide our nurses and nursing students, the treasure that they are, to a special treat. We contracted with a massage therapist from Guatemala City to come to Clinica Ezell on Tuesday evening. Over the next 24 hours, 21 nurses and nursing students enjoyed a fifteen-minute massage. Few decisions have ever been more popular!

Six more general cases on Thursday and the OR rooms were empty by noon. We sent a large group to the chocolate farm after lunch and began making plans for our departure on Friday and a made the trek into Montellano and swinging bridge.

June 1-8 team is in the books, our hearts and our memory.

