

HEALTH TALENTS INTERNATIONAL

Surgery Clinic Trip Report

May 6-13, 2017

Team Members: Surgeons: Drs. Tony Fillmore, Ken Mitchell, ***Marshal Parsons, Weerachai Wiri***; Anesthesiologist: Drs. Byron Brown, Cindy Brown; Anesthesia Resident: Dr. Gabby Brown; CRNA's: Jan DeHaven, Tiffany Horton, ***Meta Parsons***; Pediatrician: ***Dr. Supiva Wiri***; Occupational Therapist: ***Sarah Gatewood***; Dental Hygienist: Lisa Sarrett; Nurses: ***Vickie Abbott, David Abbott, Mary Browning***, Jodi Boyd, Alice Bush, Sonia Chavez, ***Christy Hallock, Cassandra Hargrove, Courtney McCoy***, Tom McIntyre, ***Martha Piercefield***, Georgia-Hart Smith, ***Noemi Wells***; Surgical Techs: ***Harrette Hodges***, Kimberly Rabe, ***Manuela Sharber***; PA Student: ***Sierra Shiyou***; Nursing Students: ***Audrey Gibson, Jenny Hoffman, Jena Starkweather***; EMT: ***Kassi Payne***; Sterilization: Cary Sills; Lay Circulators: ***Marina Bowman, Laura Perryman***; Caregivers: ***Ashlee Haynes***, Erica Horton; Handymen: ***Eric Doughty***, Terry Doughty; Translators: Alyssa Beyer, Kathlyn Beyer, Manuel Guarcas, Rita Sills, Rowdy Sarrett; Trip Host: Sheri Kretschmar; Trip Leader: Rick Harper.

(First-timers listed above in bold, italics.)

The May surgical trip is the newest one to our calendar and yet to have a large core of regular volunteers. After sending out the team list two weeks prior to our departure, one veteran remarked, "I don't know anyone on this trip." In truth, we had ten who were on the 2016 May team, along with twenty-three rookies and a few veterans from trips other than May.

Our devotional theme for the week, and our theme for this year is "Acts of Grace." Watching the daily acts of grace unfold through the eyes of our first-timers is refreshing and brings an extra measure of joy. Contrasting and complimenting the daily acts of grace with the acts of grace found in scripture during our devotional time enriched our lives, deepened our faith and calmed our spirit. It would prove to be a good week!

Four of our newcomers were from Oklahoma Christian University's nursing program and for the first time we had two nurses from their faculty. We are extremely excited about this young partnership and have two more faculty members coming down in July. Nurturing a relationship with Christian nursing programs helps Health Talents by providing a steady stream of young, eager students who, we hope, return in the future as licensed nurses. We've found this to be true through similar relationships with ACU and Harding already.

Flights and bus travel were both uneventful, the best kind, and we arrived at Clinica Ezell before 5:30. Sheri Kretschmar welcomed the team at the airport, traveled with them to Clinica Ezell and provided the initial orientation. Supplies were sorted, patients seen for consults, equipment prepped for surgery the next day and all found their way to bed after supper. *Your trip reporter and eventual team leader, Rick Harper, did not arrive until 7:30 on Sunday morning.*

Six was the magic number on Sunday, one GYN and five general cases. We want to do as many cases as possible, and our first day was a bit light. However, with half of our team being novices, this was a great way to ease into the week. Time to learn, adjust, tweak a few things and get ready for a busier day on Monday...eighteen cases on tap.

Dr. Supiva Wiri, a recently retired pediatrician, went out with Dr. Walter Sierra for his mobile clinic in Rio Bravo. Dr. Sue, as she asked us to call her, was joined on this trip by her husband, general surgeon, Dr. Weerachai Wiri. Both are originally from Thailand, but practiced in Texas for several decades and now reside in Austin. The two of them, along with Noemi Wells, a delightful young RN originally from Hungary, brought an additional international flavor to our already, international team.

Ada was one of our patients on Monday and she would be with us until we departed on Friday. She was seen by Dr. Mitchell on Sunday and scheduled for surgery, but left that same day after deciding she did not want surgery, then changed her mind once again and returned for surgery. Her indecision was understandable, yet a harbinger of trouble ahead. She needed the surgery, wanted the surgery, yet wanted to have more children...and she could not do both.

Surgeries went well on Monday, though one patient lost a little blood and would need a unit transfused on Wednesday. All in all, a good day for everyone...except Ada.

Tuesday would be an anomaly with only two GYN cases scheduled and since we had what most consider to be the swiftest GYN surgeon in our stable of volunteers on this trip, a bit disappointing. Dr. Mitchell took it in stride, telling of a time he showed up in Malawi to find no patients scheduled. Even our general patient load was a bit soft on Tuesday as we moved down our schedule and began calling patients further down the list to have them make their way to Clinica Ezell.

Sarah Gatewood, an occupational therapist, patiently waited for Tuesday when she would have a chance to go out with Noe Chan, the physical therapy provider on our team. When not busy with Noe, Sarah helped in the recovery room moving patients, doing anything she found to help. She counseled surgical patients on best practices for a speedy recovery, and fit one of our patients with a walker. All the while, Lisa Sarrett, a dental hygienist making her second trip, was plying her craft and providing additional training for our local dental hygienist.

Our light Tuesday and proactive work by Dr. Walter Sierra and nurse, Darling Ayerdis, yielded a busier Wednesday with six GYN and thirteen general cases, our biggest day of the week. Two days into her recovery, Ada was complaining of pain, discomfort and general dissatisfaction.

Here is a summary of conversations with Ada. Where do you hurt? *Everywhere!* You need to get up and walk to expedite healing, don't you want to go home? Replying with no emotion, no! What can we do for you? *Nothing.*

During the frustrating time dealing with Ada, a bouncing, giggling, bundle of joy appeared to lighten our mood. Little Petronila, three years old and in need of urgent hernia repair. Her smile

and demeanor were not so sweet the first two hours after her surgery on Thursday morning, but she soon returned to her natural cheerful self. (Petronila shown on the next page.)



Maybe Petronila rubbed off on Ada, or maybe it was the loving care and attention shown by our team. Regardless, she began to open up, let us in and share the illness surgery could not cure. This week marked the one year anniversary since her son was murdered in a random act of violence. An anniversary she hoped would be marked with surgery that would provide healing and allow her to have another son, one to replace the one she lost. Misty eyes, melted hearts, tender touches and warm embraces ensued as a crowd assembled to provide comfort and a little more understanding.

The youngest on our team, Erica Horton, went to her mother, CRNA, Tiffany Horton who sought out our Director of Coastal Operations, Carlos Baltodano. He in turn called one of our evangelists, Elmer, to minister to Ada. Jesus was much better at identifying the “real hurt,” we are a bit slower but when we mirror his example of teaching and healing, doors and hearts are open.

Ada went home on Friday and she is not forgotten. Her story was shared with our entire Guatemala team on May 23, and a charge to minister to and disciple her was shared with all.

Fifty-nine surgeries are in the book, countless lives touched and more changed. Our surgical team, at least most of us went home on Saturday, all with a charge to live out life via acts of grace so that we might glorify God. May it be so!

