

Health Talents International

September 3-10, 2016

Genera/GYN/Urology Surgical Mission

Trip Participants: *General Surgeon: Ted Cobb; Pediatric Urologists: Gerald Jerkins, Rhys Irvine; OB/GYN: Lisa Buckingham, Penny Knight, Walt Schoutko, C. Daniele Wear; Anesthesiologist: Brian Alexander; CRNA's: Allen Gould, Janet Sessums and Rachel Turner; Ultrasound Tech: Jennifer Hughes; Nurse Practitioner: Jill Travis OR Nurses: Misty Vance, Tammy Watkins, Julie Williams; Surgical Tech: Belen Barrera; OR Circulator: Carol Luallin; Recovery Room Nurses: Henry Beseda, Vanessa Booth, Barbara Burg, Elise Cooke, Brenna Finn, Lindsay Frew, Roger Graves, Kristy Handyside, Katie Hurley, Julissa Madrigal, Lauren Moore, Janelle Sladek, Sheryl Tabor, Katie Welch, Cayleigh Williamson; Nursing Student: McKenzie Watson; Translators: Alyssa Beyer, Kathlyn Beyer, Kristin Beyer, Kathy Buckingham, Maria King, Madeline Knight, Dianne Martin, Rita Sills and JoLee Thayer; Handy Men: Joshua Anderson, John Buckingham, Gary Tabor and Russ Watson; Caregivers: Chad Frew, Gayle Graves; Sterilization: Steve Cotter, Guy Martin, Cary Sills; Team Leader: Rick Harper*

This trip began Friday morning for our western most team members with a strong showing from Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho and Washington. Flight schedules require them to fly into Guatemala on Friday instead of Saturday morning and be away from home an additional day. Of course, they are also the ones who are well-rested on Saturday since the rest of us have been up since dark-thirty and dealing with a sleep deficit.

Saturday flights were on schedule and only one person missed their flight. *(Note to future team members: Show up two hours before an international flight, no awards are given to those who cut it close and miss their flight...especially when this happens two years in a row.)* All of our luggage arrived and we experienced minimal difficulty in customs. The bus was loaded, pizza and fried chicken distributed and we were on the road by 1:30.

We arrived in Montellano to cloudy skies and temperatures in the lower 80's. We quickly unloaded luggage, found our rooms and kicked into high gear. Surgical supplies were unpacked and inventoried in the dining room, medicines in the lab and our surgeons began seeing patients with the aid of our translators. Consults went late into the evening, so late we had an abbreviated orientation.

Despite our many years of experience, we continue fine-tuning our plans and schedules. Our pediatric urologists saw most of their patients for the week on Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon, a common practice when we have similar specialists on a team. However, we will alter that practice for ped-urology in the future and bring some of the simple procedures, things like circumcisions, in for a Wednesday consult and Thursday surgery.

No sense in tying up hospital beds and working late into the evening those first two days when we can do a more effective job of scheduling and prioritizing.

Sunday morning revealed the coffee club members, those who get up early and sit on the front porch, sipping their beverage, savoring the cool morning temperatures and regaling one another with stories and family updates. Breakfast was out before 8:00 and our team ate at leisure after a good night of rest. Our recovery room crew met for a few minutes at 9:00 and a short time later, we made our way across the street to worship with the Montellano church family.

By the time our worship assembly was complete, our missing team member had arrived and we were ready for Dr. Walter Sierra and our surgical orientation. Julissa, one of our RN's and a native of Costa Rica, provided the translation services. Orientation went smoothly and the OR crew ate a quick bite before heading to the OR. We had seven urology, four GYN and two general cases on the schedule and our veterans know that is more than a bit ambitious on a Sunday afternoon. This resulted in the first of two late nights in the OR before we began truly honoring our time guidelines, *"patients on the OR table by 5:00 or they are moved to the next day."*

For the second trip in a row, we added a third RN to our immediate post-op recovery schedule, an enhancement in the care we are able to deliver to our patients and greater consideration to the hours that position often requires. We were able to do this thanks to an abundance of nurses signing up and having such wonderful, talented professionals ready to serve. This is a practice we hope to continue and our optimal number of nurses in recovery now stands at fourteen, a far cry from the days we averaged less than eight.

Enrique Zapeta, one of our health promoters from the highlands, was on the schedule Monday, one of sixteen for the day. A nephrolithotomy was needed as the ultrasound showed a clear obstruction. This is a procedure within the realm of our ability to perform, though it stretches us a bit due to the recovery time and equipment readily available. Enrique did exceptionally well, and was able to be discharged on Friday morning. As the photo below reveals, the stone was extraordinarily large and it was a wonder that he was able to work and function as well as he did.



Tuesday is typically the day we hit our stride and after two days with surgery going late, it was time to work within our traditional parameters and all surgeons were informed in advance...on the table by 5:00, and with seventeen cases scheduled, no small feat. Our team rose to the occasion with extra pep in their step and creative scheduling that allowed us to squeeze in a simple case in OR one while they were at lunch, thus keeping that room in perpetual use. We were even able to squeeze in an emergency case, that evening since the OR's were empty and we still enjoyed supper together at 7:00. (One of our Tuesday consults arrived in great pain with a hernia that appeared to be strangulated and our patient was in danger of severe complications if we waited until Wednesday.)

Since we were out of the OR's at a decent hour, our devotional time was a bit more relaxed on Tuesday evening. We spent the week considering the theology found in the simple word "present." We are called to "present ourselves," or to offer ourselves, to "be present" and to "be a present." Jesus presented himself as a sin offering for us, he came to earth and was present among us and he gave his life as a present, a gift for us.

While most of us were busy in the OR or recovery room, several others were busy with various projects. Anything-man, John Buckingham, and handy-men, Joshua Anderson, Gary Tabor and Russ Watson were busy installing an intercom system, constructing benches for our new patient waiting area and when all scheduled projects were complete, using left over lumber to construct a swing set for the children.



Wednesday found us with another seventeen patients on our schedule, eight GYN, four urology and five general. Surgeries went smoothly and the afternoon rains arrived in time to provide respite from the heat. Following our devotional, we walked across to the recovery ward and sang to our patients and praised our Lord. The week was winding down.

Our schedule on Thursday was light enough to allow for a couple of trips to the chocolate farm and up the road to Chicacao, but not before another ten cases were completed. As those ten surgeries were drawing to a close, we received word that one of our patients, Silvia, was showing signs of internal bleeding. Blood work was drawn and we waited for the results, hoping for an uptick in her hematocrit.

By 2:00, the OR was empty, one chocolate run completed, autoclaves shut down and clean up began. However, Silvia took a turn for the worse and around 6:00 PM she was back in the OR and it was all hands on deck. Her latest blood tests revealed continued bleeding and not only must we identify the source of her bleeding and make repairs, she was now in need of three units of blood.

Experience is a great teacher and for several years now, we have asked team members to donate blood on Sunday afternoon so that it is there for emergencies. Three units had been drawn!

The source of her bleeding was identified in short order, she was stabilized and discharged on Saturday morning. Since the first unit of blood she received was from RN, Henry Beseda, we concluded she would soon start speaking Texan and pulling for the Texas A & M Aggies...the only unexpected consequence of her second surgery.



We concluded our day with our traditional meal of fried chicken and french fries, followed by a review of Friday's plans and time of sharing.

Seven in our group departed for the airport on Friday morning and the remainder traveled to the charming city of Antigua.

Fifty-four heaven sent servants from the US, joined up with forty from our coastal Guatemala team to glorify the Father by caring for seventy-five surgical patients and more than five hundred medical & dental patients. Truly, we are a blessed people!

