

The Guatemalan Medical Mission Experience

Rio Vista Equipo Medico
February, 2004

The Opportunity

- One resident is chosen every two years to travel to Guatemala with the Rio Vista Equipo Medico group. This group has been traveling to Guatemala every two years for the past 20 years.
- The resident is part of the surgical team; working with general, plastic and ENT surgeons on a large variety of cases.

Where is Guatemala?

- Guatemala is South of Mexico and West of Belize
- Nuevo Progreso is in the Northwest part of the country about 20 miles east of the Mexican Border.
- A six-hour school bus ride from Guatemala City.



The Road to Nuevo Progresso



The Supplies

- 70 Hockey Equipment Sized Duffel Bags.
- Everything from Sutures and Dressings to Instruments and Anesthesia Gas were packed in these bags.



Nuevo Progreso, A Town in the Jungle on the Side of a Mountain



La Hospital De La Familia



Patients beginning to line up for clinic at 6AM.



The hospital and operating room main entrance.

La Hospital De La Familia

- Father Geyatano and Sister Guadalupe were an integral part of the origin of La Hospitale De La Familia.
- The combined efforts of the Catholic Church and a group of beneficiaries from California have resulted in the development of a much needed community hospital.



Rio Vista Equipo Medico

- The team consisted of surgeons, anesthesiologists, a pediatrician, a dentist, nurses, scrub techs, translators, and support staff, 36 people in total.

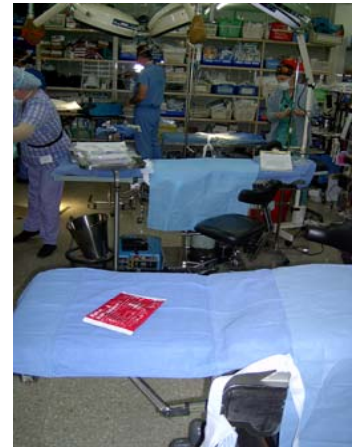


The People



The Operating Room

- One operating room.
- Three OR tables.
- Three separate teams – plastic surgery, general surgery, and ENT.



Operative Procedures

- The plastic surgery cases included: cleft lip/palate, burn contracture releases, syndactyly releases, etc.
- The general surgery cases included: hernia repairs, open chole, vein stripping, etc.
- ENT cases included: myringotomy, thyroidectomy, parotidectomy, etc.
- Any cases are open for resident participation.

Plastic Surg	50 cases
Gen Surg	62 cases
ENT	69 cases
Dental	10 cases

Clinic	# patients seen
Gen Surg	95
Plastic Surg	85
ENT	182
Pediatric	85
Total	447

The Operative Experience

- The variety of cleft lip/palate pathology is immense.
- Some patients are seen for the first time, some return for follow-up or secondary operations. A new team returns every three months.



The Operative Experience

- Some patients are not candidates for surgery because of nutritional status or the presence of infection.
- These patients are treated and referred to the next group in three months.
- This second patient underwent a left unilateral cleft lip repair.



Hospital Support Services

- Guatemalan physicians staff both the hospital and clinics for care both before and after we arrive. They do not provide surgical services.
- The development of programs like 'The Nutritional Center' allow for the care of patients not ready for surgery. They are cared for in preparation for the next group of surgeons in three months.



Hospital Support Services

- The hospital wards were staffed by very competent local nurses.
- Space was limited. No private rooms.



The Operative Experience

- A 20 year-old man who presents with bilateral cleft hands.
- We performed a syndactyly release of his left 1st and 2nd fingers.



The Operative Experience



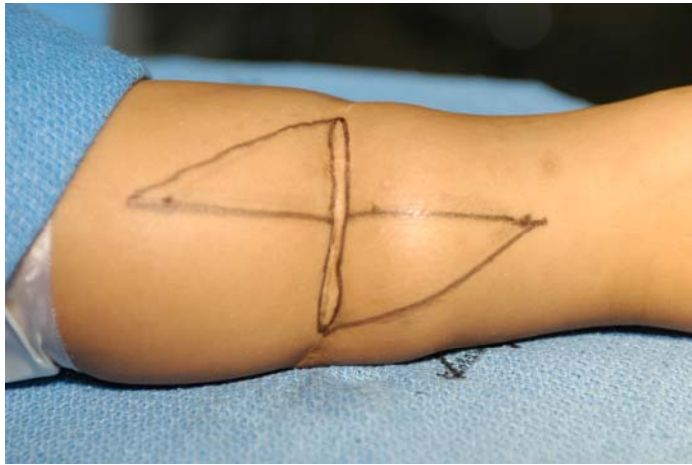
A Unilateral Complete Left Cleft Lip Repair

The Operative Experience

- This is a 4 year-old boy with a congenital contracture of his left leg. The patient had previously undergone a Z-plasty to release $\frac{1}{2}$ the contracture.
- We performed a Z-plasty to release the contracture.



The Operative Experience



The Accommodations



Final Comments

- As a resident, this was an amazing experience from both a humanitarian and clinical experience perspective.
- Recent articles (Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, January, 2004) have criticized medical missions claiming the lack of follow-up, inappropriate operative candidates, and surgeon inexperience as points of contention.
- This mission more than addressed these criticisms. It was well organized by experienced surgeons, and the patients were fully evaluated to insure good pre-operative nutrition and health. The patients have appropriate follow-up by local physicians and surgeons in three months.

Final Comments

- A special thanks to Dr. Goldfarb and Dr. Norwitz for the opportunity to participate in this great experience.

---- *Robert Paresi M.D.*