



CROSSROADS

COMMUNITY CATHEDRAL

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Greetings,

I am pleased to provide you with the following report, which highlights our activities during the last medical mission trip, and to thank you for your generous gift of time, talent and resources toward the mission.

COMM International has just completed its 5th annual medical mission and Christian outreach to Guatemala. Caring for the sick and helping the poor in the region of Esquipulas has been humbling. With the recent upheaval in the Guatemalan government, there was a disruption in the healthcare delivery and an increase in human suffering, especially in the rural areas. Many more people were in need of our help on this trip; approximately 1200 patients were seen and treated in a four day outreach, (October 8 to 11). Some patients were seen sequentially by two or more physicians, totaling 1500 encounters.

We could not have asked for a better team to take on the challenges and triumphs of this year. There were eighteen members of COMM International from the US, who paid their own way to participate in this medical mission. The four physicians in the group were Linda Taylor, MD (OB/GYN); Kweku Ghartey Sam, MD (pediatrics); Assumpta Madu, MD (ophthalmologist); and Fausty Onyirimba, MD (pulmonologist and team leader). The nursing team this year was comprised of six registered nurses: Michelle Addicott, Melissa Donor, Megan Powers, Sue Kirch, Mary Latham, and Kathleen Polhemus. Sandra Daniell-Medina was our team's intrepid pharmacist. There were seven non-medical volunteers including Benjamin Polhemus, Jeffrey Polhemus, Mary Beth Osoldrietch, Ivette Dryer, Chelsea Moskites, Salvador Rivera, and Valerie Thompson. We were also joined by a team of local volunteers, Dr. Ingrid Castaneda, Dr. Lenin Peña, and a large team of English-speaking Spanish interpreters and Christian counselors.

Services were provided in the areas of internal medicine, pediatrics, general surgery, ophthalmology and gynecology. The most common conditions we encountered were Infectious diseases, diabetes mellitus, hypertension and malnutrition. In our experience, poor maternal and infant health is prevalent, because mothers were having too many children, without spacing their pregnancies. This year we expanded our services to include family planning with placement of intrauterine devices. This would empower women to control their own fertility, which would in turn lead to better reproductive health. Many patients received gifts of clothing, footwear and food bags to those who were in greatest needs. Children received stuffed animals.

We have fond memories of all the patients, but some encounters were notable. One was the sixty year old man with throat cancer. He had no money to pay for his basic nutritional needs, let alone radiation therapy for his cancer. When we saw him, he was emaciated from severe protein calorie malnutrition. His tracheostomy was infected and he had a severe case of shingles. We were able to treat his bronchitis, as well as his shingles. In addition, he received nutritional supplements and instructions on tracheostomy care and nutrition. Although his fate seemed grim, he was extremely grateful.



Another is the fourteen-month-old girl brought in by her mother. She was critically ill with ear infections, pneumonia and bloody diarrhea. We were able to rehydrate her intravenously and treated her condition. It was gratifying to see her the next morning, markedly improved. In an



environment where the leading cause of death among children 5 years or less is treatable communicable diseases, this could easily have been fatal.

They could never repay us for what they received, but their gratitude was obvious. We were touched and deeply moved when a patient returned with a bag of oranges as a gift for us.

We are a faith-based organization and believe in the use of medications and the power of the Gospel and prayer to bring hope and healing to people. The Scripture tells us in Luke 10:9 to "heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'" With the help of local pastors, we were able to

do that. Our faith was encouraged, and many put their faith in Christ for the first time. All of this was able to occur because of your prayers and financial support; we thank you all for your generosity, support, and Christ-like compassion.

Yours Sincerely,

Faustinus Onyirimba, MD

Mission Coordinator & Team Leader

