

SEWHOPE TRIP REPORT

DATES: June 10-18, 2017

PARTICIPANTS: Coral Matus, MD; Andrew Stratton (rising M2); Keith Sweitzer (rising M2)

TRAVEL was uneventful on Spirit through Ft Lauderdale to Guatemala City, and on Avianca to Flores. We avoided excessive baggage, since Keith and Drew were staying to travel Guatemala for 2 more weeks, and needed space for travel gear.

CASA MATERNA: We spent our first 2 days seeing patient in El Chal. We were quite busy, as they had advertised our jornada the previous week. We saw a variety of patients, including prenatal visits, children, and adults. Two women from the Health Center came to help with intakes (vitals, paperwork). Mayra assisted with pap smears as well.

*An 11 month old girl with Trisomy 21 was brought by her mother requesting an ultrasound of her heart. Mom had been told that the girl needed heart surgery when she was a month old, but they had been unable to afford the trip to Guatemala City, so she wanted to know if she still needed the surgery. The child had struggled to feed in the first few weeks of life, but now was eating well, happy and playful, and developmentally progressing nicely. She certainly met 6 month milestones now, and socially was close to her chronologic age. She was able to sit on her own, but not yet crawling or pulling to stand. She had an awkward pincer grasp, and several consonant sounds. Her exam revealed a harsh murmur with both systolic (IV/VI) and diastolic (III/VI) components. She did not demonstrate any cyanosis, tachypnea, or other signs of respiratory distress. We reassured mom as best we could, and I have sent an email to Rudy to inquire about any CV surgery jornadas which might be upcoming.



*A 9 month old girl was brought by her mom for evaluation. The mom told us that the child had been diagnosed with pneumonia and hospitalized for 15 days last month (was released from the hospital about 2 weeks ago), but was still not eating and still having fevers and cough. The child was limp, grunting, and obviously very dehydrated. I tried to not appear alarmed, but I believe the mother saw the fear in my eyes. She began crying immediately when I mentioned that I thought she needed to return to the hospital. I knew that we could give the child some IV fluids in the clinic, but this girl appeared much too ill, and obviously needed more treatment than I could provide in a few hours (or even days) at the Casa Materna. After some discussion with Mayra, she informed me that there was a “Catholic clinic” where we would have to pay the initial consultation fee, including paying for an xray if the girl needed it, but if she needed to be admitted to the hospital, all her other bills would be covered by the organization (and did I think she was sick enough that she would need to be admitted?). I told her that I was quite certain they would admit the girl, and we sent child, mom, and Mayra with Q500 to the clinic. They did, in fact, admit the girl, and we learned later in the week that they were trying to get her stable enough so that they could transfer her to Guatemala City, because they thought she would need to be hospitalized for “several weeks” for hydration, nutrition, and treatment.

I also met a friend there!?



Fortunately I saw this guy in the afternoon on the last day there...! Yuk!

We charged Q10 for consultations, Q20 for pap smears, and Q50 for ultrasounds, and over the course of 2 days, brought in Q1900, which was deposited in the ALAVI account.

As we were leaving on Tuesday, Carlos asked if we could meet sometime later in the week to talk about the Casa Materna and their needs. We scheduled a meeting for Saturday afternoon.

When we returned on Saturday, we spent 3 hours meeting with the ALAVI members (Carlos, Leandro, Catalina, Juan, Julia, and Aura), as well as Orfe and Ismael and me. The first 2 hours were our typical, frustrating, fruitless dialogue. They felt that they could not continue to keep the CM open without funds, which we are no longer providing them. They must pay an accountant Q200 each month to submit the paperwork for a non-profit organization. They also have bills for electricity and water. They have not been “paying” their “workers” (Catalina and Julia mostly). They did not have good records for visits over the past 3 months (as I had asked them to do), but mostly Catalina had been working on her own most days, and she does not read or write, so was unable to keep accurate records. I asked them once again to give me a “budget” (this was about the 5th time during the 2 hours that I made this request), and told them that I could not ask the SewHope board for help for them until I had this.

**I thought we were going to end the meeting, and then Carlos ‘mentioned’ that one of the women at Catalina’s church had approached him about maybe having a nurse at the Casa Materna 1 or 2 days a week, and they would provide the nurse, as well as supplies they needed. Ismael and I looked at each other across the room...I’m pretty sure we were both thinking the same thing, “Where was this information 2 hours ago!?” We had just been talking for 2 hours about how difficult it has been to have the Casa Materna open every day with limited workers, and that without having someone there every day it was hard for people to know when they would and would not be open. We discussed the logistics of this, and I asked them to have either this woman, or their pastor (whom I have met previously) reach out to me (I gave them my email and cell phone number). I have not yet heard from them, but will reach out to them again at the end of July if I have not hear anything. Ismael was also going to see what he could find out.

→Bottom line: I would like to continue to help support them for the basic needs of the Casa Materna, including accountant, water, electricity, and minimal salary. We discussed an amount of Q2500 per month (which would be about \$333 per month). If the SewHope board approves, I would like to commit to supporting the Casa Materna with this amount every month.

While we were meeting my students were chasing chickens:



And resting:



The students were actually very ambitious and helpful. Drew (pictured here with a sweet 4-month old) was quite fluent in Spanish, and did a great job taking histories.



Keith (in the grey tshirt below) is fluent in French, which sometimes interfered with his Spanish fluency!
☺ But he was also very ambitious and helpful!



They spent nearly 2 hours on Saturday talking to this group of diabetic women about exercise, diet, medication compliance, and drinking plenty of water. The women really responded to them, and seemed to enjoy themselves.

So many of the same themes continue to rise during each trip:

1. EVERYONE is dehydrated...no one drinks enough "aqua pura".
2. People are looking for ways to be healthier, but they often hear differing opinions about things and don't know what to believe!
 - a. 2 women told me that they were told that they had ovarian cysts and needed hysterectomies
 - b. 2 other women brought pathology sheets from pap smears that showed "inflammation" and they were both told that they needed hysterectomies (of course, they would have to come up with the money to pay for it!)
 - c. People are told to buy very expensive medications (Q20-50 per day) when often there are cheaper alternatives available (especially with antihypertensives and antidiabetic medications)
 - d. Many people still think that injectable vitamins will make them feel better. May ask for vitamins and injections
3. The people whom we saw in Santa Ana quite often had been seen by 1 or 2 (or more) other doctors, and would often bring "results" or prescriptions that they had been given. They were many times asking my opinion about what they had been told, or wondered if I could provide them with the medication they had been prescribed but could not afford.
4. This was much less common in El Chal. We saw more pathology and lack of care there compared with the days in Santa Ana. I believe there is a real need to provide better access to good care to these people.

SEWHOPE STAFF:

Orfe seems to be getting along okay in her CAM boot, although she is still using crutches and isn't yet bearing much weight, even in the boot.

Mayra continues to be a wonderful resource and hard worker. She is continuing to take classes to further her education.

Seiner continues to do a great job with the kids! They seem to absolutely adore him!

Jessi arrived in Peten on Wednesday, and was helpful for the remainder of the week.

HOSTEL:

The doors are hung on the bedrooms, as are the windows. Ismael sent a sample of a "screening" that he wants to put over the doors and windows, as well as the large open to the common meeting area, to avoid mosquitos. He is also awaiting final decisions about latrines and showers for the large bedroom.

June is my favorite month in Peten! The mango trees are FULL, and there is nothing better than a freshly-picked mango. I nearly ate my weight in mangos this week! The patients would laugh at me peeling and eating the mangos, as juice dripped down my chin! This lady was so kind as to share this HUGE mango with me!



Respectfully submitted,

Coral Matus