

DATES OF TRIP: March 12-19

PARTICIPANTS: Ed Matus, Coral Matus, Alex Matus, Lyndsey Matus, Alex Nester, Gretchen Shirar

TRAVEL:

*Baggage fees are becoming more expensive. Not only did we pay for each bag for the flights to Guatemala, but Avianca is now charging for the 2nd bag from Guatemala City to Flores. We paid \$224 for 5 bags, and then only 2 of our 10 bags made it on our flight (the rest came later in the evening). Altogether, we paid \$550 to take 12 bags from Detroit to Flores. This makes shipping a container seem less expensive in my mind.

MEDICAL ENVIRONMENT:

Patients continue to struggle with access to care, as well as misleading health information.

- "Acido urico" continues to be a diagnosis that many patients report, and attribute any type of joint pain (knees, shoulder, back, etc.) to this problem.

- Many also bring positive "pylori H" tests, and have paid a high price for long courses of treatment. (We know from a sampling of testing that we did a couple of years ago that the VAST MAJORITY of adults are "positive" for H. pylori. This only means that they have the IgG antibodies, indicating that they have had at some point in their lives. Even after treatment, this remains positive. Gold standards in the US now is either biopsy by EGD or fecal testing for diagnosis and treatment)

-Medication costs are high, and many patients pay for expensive medications that are recommended (newer antihypertensives, antibiotics that do not appear to be necessary, etc.). If we can stick to our generic formulary and obtain medications from in country, that seems to be the best option.

-MANY (most? All?) women who have ever had an ultrasound have been told that they have "cysts", and that they need followup. I try to explain that cysts are not always abnormal or dangerous, but they seem to be very focused on this as a source of pain, and request followup ultrasound to see if they still have "cysts". I am convinced I could spend 8 hours a day for many weeks doing ultrasounds for pelvic pain!

-With ultrasound technology availability, many patients come requesting ultrasound for various things, from evaluation for "gastritis" to "colitis" (they have been told that this can be diagnosed by ultrasound). Some have even said that they had a "brain ultrasound", and others have requested a "full body ultrasound". I spend much time explaining that ultrasound has limited use for specific disorders.

CLINIC in SANTA ANA:

We were quite busy all 4 days, with a full waiting area each morning when we arrived, and a steady flow of patients throughout the day. We saw patients from 8:30 am until 6:30 or 7:00 pm each day, including patients of all ages and complaints.

*I am always amazed by the mothers who care for significantly disabled children, and how resourceful they can be. One mother brought an 8 year old who was mute and unable to walk. She “carried” her (which meant that she held her under her arms and allowed her to bear minimal weight on her legs so that she could move forward). It was obvious that this will not work for much longer, as the child will soon weight nearly as much as the mother. We measured her for a wheelchair, which will be life-changing for this mother (and child)

*A 7 year old presented with a concerning (firm, non-mobile) right anterior cervical lymph node which had not responded to a course of antibiotics given at another clinic. Orfe was able to get her connected with a surgical “jornada” which will be coming to the area in April.

BIRTHING CENTER

We saw about 20 patients, including some prenatal visits, a few children, and some adults.

We met with the ALAVI group. Catalina reports that she continues to use the center for births, but that she has had a few “slow months” recently. She still opens the doors several days a week for prenatal checks. They would like to be able to offer prenatal vitamins, as well as simple interventions such as aerosols, ibuprofen and Tylenol for people in the area. We discussed some ways that they can be self-sustaining. They will keep a close record of all interventions and charges for the next 2 months until our return trip in May.