

Trip Report

February 2023

(I am not including info about what Dave did! His experience was amazing and I'm having him do his own report)

Feb 2-21 – Anne

Feb 12-19- Randy

Feb 4- Feb 18 Dr. Valerie Fields

Hector Garcia (cytologist) Feb 5- Feb 21

Ian Appling (Epidemiologist, Valerie's son) Feb 10 – feb 18

Dave Mallory Feb 12- Feb 20

Melinda Rakesmith Feb 12 – Feb 18

One of our best trips yet!

PRELIMINARY RESULTS FROM TRIP

(These are very preliminary...we don't have thin prep or biopsy reports back yet obviously)

Total paps, biopsies, colposcopies, cryotherapies.....1,666

Conventional paps (read while we were there and patients received results)1396

Thin preps (will be read by ProPath) 124

Colposcopies.....73

LEEP cone biopsies (done for patients with cancer or HGSIL diagnosed on paps).....24

5 patients diagnosed with invasive cancer (4 of them were asymptomatic)

HGSIL.....24

LGSIL....28

ASCUS....98

ASCUS (Rule out HGSIL) 13

AGUS 7

Normal 1186

Got off to a rough start. Ice storm in Texas caused our American airlines flights to be cancelled. Anne was able to rebook on Spirit for the same day. Emily had to cancel. Chetti was planning on going on Spirit until she tested positive for COVID the day before leaving so she had to cancel. Turned out it was all for the best since her husband also got COVID and was hospitalized for 2 days. Her mother-in-law passed away that same week. So turned out it was all for the best that she didn't come (although we missed her greatly!)

Hector's flight was also cancelled so he ended up coming on Feb 5 and stayed till the end.

Andres's wife (Flor) also came up from Matzatenango during the last week to work with us and to learn more cytology. Someone from her clinic drove her 12 hours (through the night) to get there and then they turned around and went back! We paid for her return trip on TAG back to Guatemala City. She left with me on Feb 21.

My own flight there was pretty uneventful except for the hassle about bringing in the 2 microscopes. Glad I had a “customs letter” and “receipt” saying the value of the 2 of the them. The gal threatened me that I would have to bring them back to the U.S. with me or else I would have to a tax on them on my return. I had to chuckle thinking about how they would know that when I returned! But to avoid a problem, I offered to pay the tax upfront (11% of \$750). She seemed shocked that I offered and she really had no way to figure out how much to charge so she told me to just bring the microscopes back!

Lesson #1 Always bring a “customs” letter and invoice for anything valuable

Friday, Feb 3

Ran 5 miles in the morning on the road.

Patients arrived by 6AM. Many traveled from very far distances....often 4 hours away. Took buses and had to leave their houses at 3am.

I unpacked the new colposcope. It is awesome!!!! I can see so much better with it!

Was busy all day. Lots of colposcopies. Many patients were following up from previous abnormal. Andres is now working here full time. I did about 10 “conventional” paps and he read them all. Patients LOVED getting results the same day. 2 were abnormal and I was able to do the colpos on the patients the same day which was great.

Andres and I and Mayra talked a bit about how we need to find a better way to keep track of abnormal....especially ones from years back. There really is not a streamlined system at this point. Same thing with getting in touch with patients. I want to make all of this a priority on this trip since now we have Mayra working on all this full time and we have Andres and Bianay and now Sandra Yat. Sandra was great today – I felt like she really worked hard on getting in touch with patients. She seems to communicate with the patients much more effectively than Bianay and seems to be able to convince even the reticent ones to come. She is so kind to them and explains things to them in a way they can always understand.

4th time today that the money transfer from U.S did not work (at a cost of \$75 each time) Mayra went to the bank and still couldn't straighten it out. Finally, Lucky called the main office and figured out what was the problem. Mayra hadn't realized that there was a page that had the new information on it and she never sent it to Gloria.

Seiner gave me a tour of the school. He is so proud of it. I always want to spend more time with the kids but just too many patients!

I made some spaghetti for dinner! Now its 7:30 and I'm catching up with a few things. Its crazy to see how we have grown. New guard here tonight – Kenneth! He seems very nice.

Saturday, February 4, 2023

Ran 5 miles

Great day. I saw 37 patients. Lots of colpos and biopsies. People are so very grateful. Some of them, I have seen several times – we were like old friends!

Everyone here was so very helpful. Team seems to be working well together. I continue to be so impressed with Sandra

Valerie Fields (our pathologist) arrived this evening. We went to the grocery store after we got her at the airport to get food for the week.

We ate Pollo Campero for dinner and we had a great chat about how we could expand the program here. She has lots of great ideas.

The church down the block is having their usual evening session now. It is SOOOO loud! Glad I brought ear plugs!

Lesson #2 – Remind all trip members to bring ear plugs and eye covering (very bright at night)

Sunday, February 5, 2023

Ran 6 miles

Listened to On Being talk about Awe – it was so inspiring

Ran/danced home to music! It feels so good to be here!

Pretty steady patients from 7am until about 3PM. Mostly procedures.

Found out that one of the moms in our program died – Lorena Martinez Piox. She had echinococcus. We had tried to treat her but the parasite had invaded her liver too much and she died. She used to clean our clinic and was also such a joy. I knew her for years. I kind of have a sense of guilt that I wasn't able to find an answer but it was too advanced when we first saw her for it. She kept working hard right up until a few days before she died. We meant to visit with her family but never got the chance. I will follow up with Seiner about their family

Had a meeting this evening with Dr. Palma and his wife and Sandra (Social Worker), Mayra, Andres and Valerie

Talked about

1. Starting cytology lab and school. We walked through the area that we designated as lab. One big problem is that it will need to be temperature controlled. Plan to work toward getting ISO laboratory designation.
2. Talked about relationship with 3 health areas and having them send us their paps. I said that one requirement is that the paps will be collected properly. We talked about training the people that will take them and giving them a certificate. One problem is that often, medical students collect them with no supervision when they work in San Benito with Dr. Palma

Also talked about finding a way to have the government pay us for reading their paps. This would of course require approval from Ministry of Health. I am supposedly having a meeting with Dr. Camel (head of Reproductive Health in Ministry of Health) Dr. Palma would like to participate in that meeting.

3. Discussed Rotary grant. The club in Flores would like to see the budget before the approve being a part of it. Hope to apply for \$50,000 to \$100,000
4. Discussed issues with HPV testing machines. Discussed RNA/DNA...cost (7-10\$ each)...accuracy....what to do if they are positive. (Up to 25% could be positive)
5. Government is now starting a pilot program testing with HPV. They received one machine that is in GC. They will be sending 3000 cassettes to Peten – 1000 each to SB, Sayaxche and Poptun. We all agree that co-testing is best. Plan is that any positive with have follow up VIA and then thermoablation if positive (this is an insane plan!)

Had some fun time with the Mayra, Bianay and Carmen laughing hysterically. I will share that with any of you if interested!

Monday, Feb 6

Ran in the morning a mile. But I got hassled by some guys on a motorcycle which kind of freaked me out so I came back.

Clinic pretty busy

Lots of paps and biopsies.

Problem was that Mayra scheduled a jornada also in Santa Ana thinking that there was another Gringo to do the paps which there was not. So Bianay did them and then Valerie and Andres read them.

Hector arrived on the TAG flight at 10 am. He is so pleasant and really dealt with all the mishaps so well. Because his original flight was cancelled, we had to change his TAG flight. We couldn't get a seat yesterday so he had to spend the night in Guatemala City. The Hostal Los Lagos was filled up so he ended up staying in this crappy hostel that didn't even have water. And he didn't even complain!

Lesson #3 – Make sure Emily or someone knows about travel changes so that accommodations can be made in a timely manner.

As soon as he arrived, he got to work and joined Andres and Valerie reading paps. I think they did 30

Then Melinda came around 2. Now I have an awesome roommate!

We packed up in the evening for the early morning trip.

Tuesday, Feb 7

Left the clinic at 5:20 and drove to a place near San Luis called Chacte

We did 175 paps. Nurses at the clinic were nice. I taught them how to take paps correctly and they seemed really appreciative to know what had to be done. They all realize that the quality of paps in Guatemala is terrible. Reminds me what an uphill battle it would be to implement a full scale pap program around Peten.

All were read by the team before we left. Good feeling. Everyone left feeling very happy. We stayed there till 7:15 Pm

On the way home, Hector and Valerie had asked Mayra to stop at the store. I realized they were going in to buy alcohol. I kind of panicked realizing I hadn't told them people couldn't drink on the trip. I failed to share the "volunteer agreement" with them. So I quickly said "I'm sorry but we can't drink on the trip". Everyone got quiet Super uncomfortable. But later I talked with them and explained and they were both fine with it. Hector was hilarious....He said I was right and that his wife would have been happy to know this!

Melinda learned how to do the staining of the slides which helped a lot. She is also really good at organizing and keeping the flow going which kept everyone on time.

Lesson #4have everyone sign volunteer agreement before leaving!

Wednesday, Feb 8

Drove over 2 hours each way

220 patients

Kind of exhausting. Valerie came back complaining a LOT. She really started reprimanding me as we were eating dinner (at 9PM...everyone was listening). Said there was no way they could keep up this pace and I was expecting way too much of people who are volunteers. Another really uncomfortable moment. I was getting kind of panicked about how the rest of the trip was going to go.

I went to bed and started thinking about how to handle it...so the next morning I just brought a lot of thin preps with us and told everyone that at a certain time, we would just switch to those so we wouldn't have to stay so late. Right away, she and Hector insisted that we did not have to do that and that they would find a way to get them done. Valerie said she would stay behind on Saturday to get a break. It all worked out...no more complaining after that.

Lesson #5 and #6. Do a better job warning volunteers that it is difficult to know exactly how things will go. They may have to put in longer days and work harder than they expected. And #6....if things do take a turn for the worse...Just smile and pray! God will provide an answer!

Thursday, Feb 9

Drove 1.5 hours each way

San Luis

Got back around 8 – 9 PM

About 80 patients

They set up the "lab" outside which was really nice. I think it kind of gave a sense of calm and was much more cheerful than being inside.

A patient came in who once again reminded us of why we do this work. A 35 year really pretty woman came in. I thought she looked sad and especially pale. I asked if everything was ok? She said she had been spotting for the last 8 months. I immediately got that sick feeling that she has cervical cancer. I guess I've been doing this long enough to see the signs. I felt kind of nauseated as I sat down. And of course, I placed the speculum and there it was....huge, "fungating", foul smelling, bleeding. I just wanted to cry. I talked with her...the usual story.....5 children at home, husband left for the U.S. and sends her nothing, first baby at age 15, previous normal pap year after year. You could write a book about it. I guess the one positive is that as an organization, we have come so far. I was able to have Sandra come in and arrange everything with her. Sandra coordinated with the Social Worker in this woman's community to have her come to our clinic next week. I can do the biopsy and have the report sent to her soon after I get back. Then AFOSA (the organization we are collaborating with) will have someone go with her to Guatemala City and INCAN will do her treatment for free. Of course, I have little hope that she will be cured.

Friday, Feb 10

About an hour drive....Poptun

80 patients

We are really in a good rhythm now. Much more organized. Set up is quicker. We get the slides to them more quickly and so we got done earlier.

Funny story – the nurses told me that sometimes they give the patients ibuprofen for abnormal paps because the paps are read as "inflammation". Too funny!

I continue to teach the nurses how to take paps. It is unbelievable to me the way they have been doing them. Shocking that no one in the lab (i.e. Veronica from Poptun – the head cytologist) has ever corrected them all these years.

Saturday, Feb 11

Machaquilla – this is the town where Dr. Palma is from. I talked with him about how he was able to become so successful when he came from such a small place with the same kinds of schools we often encounter. He had great parents. His dad was a teacher. Parents cared a lot about his success. He had big dreams when he was very young and his family made him feel that anything was possible. He learned about the medical school in Cuba and went there. BTW, that med school in Cuba is AMAZING!

Some of the workers from Poptun came with us (of course NOT Veronica!). They were eager to help and to learn more. I was so thrilled to see that their head Social Worker (Elvira) came to talk to me to find out how she could learn more about the whole subject – the basic biology, what cytology is, how people get cervical cancer, risk factors,

what different diagnoses mean, what the treatments are for “precancer”, what happens if you get cancer, etc, etc.

I talked with Mayra about it later and we thought it would be great to set up a day long conference to present to lay people such as social workers.

Ian arrived this evening

Sunday, Feb 12

Clinic at SewHOpe clinic

Patients arrived at 6am.

Saw about 70 people.

Dr. Palma came.

Delicious vegetable soup for everyone! Actually, we were provided lunch for free at every jornada. This was paid for by the Ministerio de Salud

Patient with HGSIL/cancer . She asked me how she got this. Told me about the being kidnapped and raped for 3 days by 3 older men when she was 12– too many heart breaking stories.

Sandra is amazing

Talked to Mayra about her role here

Randy arrived in the evening. I’m always much more at ease when he’s here!

Monday, Feb 13

Bianay saw patients in Santa Ana in morning. Much lighter day for me

I saw a few patients. Ran 11 miles.

Long meeting with Mayra and Elder and Randy. Before the meeting, Mayra expressed some concern that Elder does not listen to her at all. She does not think that he works much with the kids and she has some concerns about the way he cares for the fish tanks.

Started out by asking Elder what he thought his role was with public health projects.

He said:

Working on cultivating the plants.

Thinking of ways to improve these projects

Doing projects that the children can be involved in.

Helping to provide nutritious food for the children.

Working on my reports where I try to show the work that I do.

Said that when they have the harvests, they sell left over food that is not eaten by the children or given to families.

He said that last year, they put in 14 stoves. They visited the families 2 months after installation and again in the year to make sure that the stoves and ecofilters are working well. Everyone paid the 400 Q and everyone loved the stoves and ecofilters. Only one woman had a problem with the aluminum chimney collapsing but we fixed that.

He has not yet decided on families for which to install stoves this year. He said that when Seiner had his reunion with the families, he did not have the budget and did not know how many could be installed this year. He will work with Seiner to arrange another reunion soon. He sees from the budget that he can install 15.

We talked at length about point of chicken, fish and agriculture projects to be opportunities for the children to learn about science, business, team work. He suggests asking Seiner if there can be space made during the class time to teach these things (maybe 30 minutes – 1 hour)

We talked about working with the families either on our property or at their own homes to grow their own vegetables. He said they had many excuses about why they couldn't do it. Too busy, too much work, not enough space at their homes, don't have enough time to keep up with the watering. However, there were 3 families that he worked with last year on the chicken project and home garden.

Problems with seeds. Many of the seeds (watermelon, melon and peppers) did not germinate. He thinks they were "bad".

Has not had this problem with other seeds so he will not attempt to grow these this year.

Sometimes there are difficulties with some crops at certain times of the year. Randy encouraged him to pick crops that are easy and that will give the children a sense of success.

This year, he did not get the children involved in the beginning because there was so much rain. We encouraged him to keep the children involved in all aspects of this.

Chicken projects

There are currently 150 chickens. 30 children are involved. Typically, about 10 chickens will die.

He typically has groups of 3 kids come in the morning and afternoon. With more than that, they don't pay attention and food around too much. Last year, he spent a week training them in what to do and then left it up to them. Sometimes they wouldn't pay attention if there were too many of them.

Randy talked about giving them more incentive to do this job well. Perhaps they could get 3 chickens each and either sell them or have their families eat them.

Idea to have 22 chickens one day to feed entire group. Takes 11 chickens to feed the morning group.

Maybe given recognition to the kids that did the work when everyone is eating the food.

Think about starting an "agronomy club". They could care for chickens and gardens. Do some investigating. Kind of like "4H"

Vivero (Greenhouse)

They taught the kids how to raise plants from "cuttings". They would bring them home and grow them and then sell them to SEwHOpe for 5Q and then SewHope would sell for Q15.

We talked about having them continue to care for the plants when they come here and then they could make more money when the plants were sold. Parents need to know about money exchange.

Parents are not used to "after school" activities so this would have to be introduced slowly

Fish Farms

Fish from November grew and were sold. Other fish bought at Nuevo Horizonte all died the day after they were put in.

Randy and Elder talked a lot about being careful to put the fish in the new tank. Need to oxygenate the water for 2-3 days before transferring.

Randy will be here on Saturday when the fish arrive and they will work on it together. Might be good to have some of the kids come to watch the process.

Elder thinks there is a better chance that these fish will live because they are smaller than the previous ones so they don't need as much oxygen to survive. The company was unwilling to give a guarantee. Elder has test strips to test the water before transferring the fish.

Talked about guards doing all of the maintenance of the property including all of the chopping (Anne and mayra had a meeting with the 3 guards later in the evening to discuss this. They were very receptive to this idea.)

Water filters

They were not using the water filter in Rosa Lita so now we have it. Have to decide where to donate it. Perhaps in a school.

The water filter in the Casa Materna in Chal is just inside the building which is not being used. Need to contact Aura who is on the Board there to see if they will give it back to us since they are violating the contract that they signed. We would be agreeable to the filter being used in the school there.

There is currently a water filter in the school in Santa Ana and also in the school in Purusila and they are being well used.

We emphasized that we expect that he checks up on the water filters at least twice a year.

Elder says that he did not get a "B" drivers license that he needs in order for our insurance to cover him. I told him we would pay for it so he said he would work on getting it this week.

Discussed replacing the bushes around the property with Clavel. Anne and Mayra also discussed this with the guards later and they would prefer Clavel with the wire running within it.

We also discussed the fact that Mayra is Executive Director here and ultimately she has to monitor what they are doing with their projects and he needs to follow her direction.

Meeting with all the employees (15) in the evening with me and Randy. We took some nice group photos. Overall, they are so positive and seem really happy to work here.

Started out with thanking them for their incredible work and recognizing how far we have come. We went around the room asking one goal they had for the coming year.

Many suggestions such as

Working with the kids more on the projects

Continuing to learn and making projects better They they would learn

Continuing to protect SewHope

Putting a fence around the whole property

Improving math and reading for the children

“Teaching everything I know”

Improving administrative part – legal documents, etc

Learning more about cervical cancer

Learning more English and Quechi!

Expanding cervical cancer program.

I talked about keeping God at the center of who we are and keeping our mission and vision as we expand.

Getting a cytology lab and school.

Keeping harmony and respect for each other.

Getting an International Lab certification.

Tuesday, Feb 14

Randy built the book cases for the school.

He fixed my old colposcope yesterday so now we have 2 fully functional colposcopes which is awesome! He also fixed shower head in one of the bathrooms and did some desperately needed painting in the bedroom!

He brought Elder to get his drivers license – Elder was told that because he has a “C” license, he has to wait 2 years (one year has already passed) before he can get the B license. Although he can legally drive a car, he would not be covered on our insurance until he gets the B license.

This was news to us and we made it clear he cannot drive any of the vehicles until he gets the other license.

Went to Remate – Virginia Tejada and her niece, Dr. Ana Griselda, were there. Dr Ana is the President of the Guatemala Association of Obstetrics and Gynecology. She was thrilled to work with us and really wants to help us with this work. We saw about 80 patients. Virginia arranged for us to have a great breakfast and lunch at a nearby restaurant.

There was a LOT of speechifying at the clinic today. They had it all decorated outside with balloons and other decorations. Too funny!

Ian working on improving our pap requisition forms. He suggested that we start noting which patients are "Indigenous". We can usually tell that from the names. He had a good point that a lot of grants prefer it when you show you are working with Indigenous people.

Now that Melinda is gone, Ian learned how to stain the slides and stained slides.

Andres' wife Flor (Dulce) is also reading slides today and learning from everyone. She is amazed at how good our slides are and she is an eager learner!

We stopped at Virginia's house after the jornada and briefly stopped at the lake. It was beautiful and peaceful.

Randy and I went to Sarita Ice Cream to celebrate Valentines day and got the triple scoop "Bomba". Oh how the simple things in life can be so wonderful!

Wednesday, Feb 15

Jornada in San Francisco. 120 patients

This is where Mayra's husband works. He is amazing. Best clinic I have ever seen in Peten. Clean and organized. They were so welcoming to us.

At dinner, I asked Hector and Valerie what has surprised them most about the trip.

Hector said he was really surprised that the government clinics have allowed such lousy paps for so long and that they (the managers) show little interest in improving. Valerie said she was surprised at how great our cytotechs (Mayra and Andres) are at reading.

Went shopping for food and went to bank in the evening. That took a long time!

Lesson #7 – Need a better system for getting food.

So many patients are so incredibly grateful. One woman had cervical cancer 4 years ago and never had the money to go back to Guatemala City for follow up. She was tearful and hugged me thanking us to be able to reassure her that she was doing well.

ALL of the patients with HGSII tell us that they have often had paps before that were all read as normal.

Dr. Palma called me very excited to say that this older American couple who support AFOSA wanted to meet with us to potentially donate to us. So we went and had an hour long meeting with them (Mark and Faye Richardson and their 2 adult sons). In reality, they just wanted to hear about our programs. They really want to support conservation effort.

Thursday, Feb 16

Jornada in hospital in San Benito

What a dump!

At first, I couldn't figure out how we were going to make it work but I guess we've done it enough that we quickly rearranged things and got the flow going.

We were able to do HPV testing. Dr. Palma is in Rotary and he has been working with a Rotary club in California with a Dr. Richard who had supplied them with over a \$100,000 worth of supplies. They bought them a machine that does HPV testing (Ampfire). I am a little skeptical of it. I had a zoom meeting with the company a few months ago.

Anyway, we did HPV testing on 200 patients. I have not received all of those results yet.

Dr. Deborah Fuentes (an OB GYN resident) worked with me all day. She was especially lovely and sincere. I hope we continue a relationship with her in the future. She ended up spending her only day off (the following Sunday) with me at the clinic when I was doing the biopsies I had to laugh when we had a patient with postmenopausal bleeding and we decided to do an endometrial biopsy. This is such a simple procedure but the way they do it there is quite complicated! Took us about an hour!

Friday, Feb 17

Jornada in Sayaxche.

Another disastrous, filthy place.

140 patients

Total disarray when we arrived

Sandra and Carmen set up their usual table in the front outside. WE really have a great system.

They give all the patients their results before they leave and they set them up with appointments at our clinic for treatments.

Everyone on our team working 100% all the time.

Saturday, Feb 18

Patients arrived at 0530. Clinic started at 0630.

I had a chance to talk with Sandra. I told her how highly I thought of her and how we don't want to lose her and asked how she likes working here. She got tearful and talked about how she has never seen a place like this. She said you can just feel God's presence all the time. She LOVES the work and thinks Mayra is an awesome boss and has been so kind and patient with her. I asked if it is a problem that she is just living in a room with no refrigerator and she said "not at all". She really hopes to continue with us for the long term. She said that a few years ago, she felt that God had a higher purpose for her so she went back to school to become a Social Worker. She never knew what door would open but she feels this is where God intended her to be.

I came to clinic at 0630. The gal who cleans (with the pytergium_) was here already to work.

Sandra arrived at 0645 even though I told them to come later.

I thought it would be a good time to talk.

She loves the whole treating cancer (she had hgsil)

When she decided to become a social worker, she didn't know what to do. Looking for "alternatives"

Valerie left today. After a rocky start, everything went really well with her. She is really hoping to help us with getting a lab going and she is planning on returning soon. She got a little teary when she left and told me that she felt she had really been able to "make a difference" on this trip. She said that one morning she was looking at the children of the moms running around and she was thinking that this trip probably allowed many of them to continue to have a mom.

Randy continues humbly doing whatever is needed! First to do dishes in the evening! Fixes locks, built more shelves, encourages Elder, drives everyone anywhere they need to go. I had to force him into some photo ops today!

Story of the day

I had seen a 30 year old woman yesterday. She is developmentally delayed and she was adamant that she had never been sexually active. I almost didn't do her pap. Fortunately, I did and it turned out to be HGSIL. Colposcopy looked awful.

Turned out that she was adopted when she was in her teens and her mom told me later that she had been sexually abused as a child. Another heartbreaking story. Fortunately, she came. Her mom said that she had heard we were a quality organization which was why she trusted her to examine her.

Sunday, Feb 19

Randy went home in the morning.

Busy day with biopsies and follow up in our clinic.

Lots more heartbreaking stories. 69 year old woman here for follow up. Cytotechs had diagnosed her with cervical cancer this week. Her daughter was with her. Daughter was devastated. Sometimes I wonder why this cancer is allowed to continue in all these poor countries when there is potentially such good prevention. Do we think these lives are not as important? Do we think this daughter is not going to be as devastated as daughters in the U.S.? Do we think poor people are expendable? In truth, these people are even more dependent on their family members than we are.

Other story of the day. ALERT – if you don't have a stomach for medical things, don't read this! 36 year old woman came in for pap. No complaints. When I placed speculum, I saw this light brown creamy stuff in the vagina. I have seen it a couple of times in other women here and I just thought it was some weird cream that they use here to treat infection...but this was much more. I asked her what cream she had put in there? Well, guess what? It was stool (yes, poop). Turned out she had a difficult delivery of a 9 pound baby 15 years ago. The posterior wall of the vagina had torn into the rectum. This happens here also in the U.S but we know how to fix it. Well they didn't fix it right there and initially she had absolutely no control of her bowel movements with no closure between the rectum and vagina. So she went to Guatemala City for

“reconstruction” and things vastly improved. However, she continues to have stool in vagina. I examined her and sure enough there was a fistula between the rectum and vagina. Pretty impossible to fix in Guatemala. I guess the thing that amazed me most is that she was just grateful that it wasn’t as bad as it had been before!

Another sad story – another woman with HGSII. Had her first baby at 13. Then twins at 14 and another baby at 15. All were from her stepfather! Her own mom knew and was furious at her for having sex with her husband! What do you even say???. We talked a long time....so sad that all these years later she is now dealing with a disease that comes from this creep who ruined her life.

Her mother is still with this man

Monday, Feb 20

Another day of treatments in the clinic. Hector said he never dreamed how much this trip would change his life. Never dreamed what a difference he would make. We diagnosed 5 patients with cancer (only 1 had symptoms) and close to 30 with severe dysplasia who will potentially be cured. He is SOOOO excited about everything. He already with Andres a lot during the trip to set up lab protocols and they have already created binders and forms that are needed. He is setting up quality control mechanisms and is working on helping me set up plans for the lab and a budget.

Another patient story

At the end of the day, a 48 year old woman came in for follow up on abnormal pap. Her daughter was with her. Daughter was extremely angry saying that her mom kept going for biopsies and no one was telling them anything. She had all her paperwork with her. Turned out that the woman had been told she had cancer over a year ago but they were all in denial and nothing had been done. Her exam was actually normal. So we were able to get everything clarified for them. I did another biopsy and we got her set up to go down to INCAN in Guatemala City for treatment. IN truth, her slide had been difficult to read and Hector made a good call in calling it abnormal. If he had not, she would have believed that all the other doctors were wrong and she would not have gotten treatment.

We had a meeting with the teachers on Monday evening. Talked about better discipline in the classrooms, not having the kids outside at different times because it is very disruptive, what we should do about their lunches, some other challenges. Overall, considering this is just the second month, all is going well.

Seiner expressed frustration because Elder came in last Monday and said that Anne and Randy wanted the kids to always be involved in the garden programs. Without involving Seiner in any planning, he just took the kids out of the classroom. I was a bit shocked. Will talk with Board about issues involving Elder.

Had another meeting with Elder and Marcelo and Mayra (Hector there for translation) afterward. Will follow up with Board about that meeting.

Miscellaneous

DON'T forget to bring leg pads for LEEP machine with next trip!
Also more biopsy cups

Eliza (from Corazones in Accion) put us in touch with Julio Martinez Anderson. He is the owner of the big ranch across the street from the school. He owns other ranches in Santa Ana. He owns a company that sells veterinary supplies. He wants the kids of the families that work for him to attend our school and he is willing to pay to have them attend. Also wants us to have medical jornadas for his staff.

The manager there will be following up with Mayra.

Need to plan May trip soon. There is a lot of interest from other cytotechs who are friends of Hector's.

I had a meeting with Mayra and Dr. Palma in early January. I told them to do whatever it takes to make sure we had lots of patients. I suggested advertising. Ultimately, they spent Q5000 on radio announcements and facebook boosting. It certainly paid off! We should consider this for all jornadas.

So far, I have not been able to set up the meeting with that Dr. Camel. Hope it will still happen.

Randy and Dave walked around the school and suggested that it needs more grading around the building. Also, needs touch up paint. Also suggested putting in collecting system on roof to catch rain water that could be used for gardens and prevent splashing on building.