

## Trip Report

May 3-10, 2023

Anne Ruch, Roxanne Ward, Emily Osborn

Wednesday, May 3

Left Toledo at 3:15 am. Randy was the faithful chauffer as usual! Trip here uneventful except TAG decided to suddenly increase the cost of suitcases to \$3 a pound. I told him I thought it was criminal and he said in his broken English "I can imagine what it is like to walk in your shoes"! Cost of bringing items into Guatemala is getting increasingly expensive. Going forward, probably won't bring anything unless it's something we really can't get there.

Thursday, May 4,

Ran in the morning. Sun is up at 5:15 so I was comfortable running most mornings which kept me sane!

Saw a lot of repeat paps in the clinic – people who were following up from previous treatments. Made me so happy to see so many coming back after their high grade dysplasia and been removed and now they are fine. Many were truly so grateful and realized they were saved from cancer. **By the end of this week, we are up to #2449 paps/biopsies/treatments for 2023! Goal is 5000 for the year and we are on track!**

Our entire Pap system has really been upgraded over the last year and is dramatically improved.

1. I have always said that it makes little sense for me to be doing paps there when nurses can easily be trained to do them. Now, (other than in jornadas), our own staff are doing them all and I am just doing the treatments. As we continue to increase our numbers, this will be a great opportunity to bring other gynecologists. Much easier to find people to come if they know their skills are being used.
2. We have also dreamed for many years of having a system where our own staff read the paps so patients can get high quality and timely results. Andres and Mayra are both excellent. Both Dr Fields (the pathologist from previous trip) and Hector agree they are as good as any cytologist in the U.S. Also awesome that the paps are read during the same day when we have jornadas. The patients are so grateful and more likely to come when they know they will get results that day.
3. Mayra set up a new system using Google Sheets. Of course, it only works when we have a "Cell signal" but that is becoming much, much more widespread throughout Guatemala and we even had it in our jornada this week which was in an extremely remote village. Now, the patient information is entered by Sandra or Bianay so I can see it when the patient comes in the room and I don't have to enter it. Then, I enter exactly what I did and the requisition numbers for the samples. Then, the cytologist enters their

results. I can then see the results and make my recommendation about the follow up. MUCH, MUCH more streamlined, fast and effective.

4. *I also contacted ProPath to have them make log-in information for Mayra so that she can directly access biopsy reports. When patients return for treatments, she can print the biopsy reports (also pap reports) and give them to patients. Also, when patients are sent to the local hospital for a hysterectomy or to INCAN for cancer treatment, she can easily access the reports. Much more professional!*
5. *Mayra and Carmen also came up with a somewhat better system for tracking patients with abnormal. I think it still needs to be refined but it is an improvement.*

Met with Dr. Raul Ochoa who is the head of reproductive health for “Peten Norte” which includes San Benito. He seems all excited about working with us but they all seem excited – putting in the needed work is another issue.

Roxanne and Emily worked with the students (see their reports)

Friday May 5, 2023

Drove 4 hours to a remote village called La Pimiento. Left at 4AM. A couple of minutes after we left, I said “Oh we forgot to pray”. I was surprised at how really seriously our team took that. They clearly realized it was an oversight. Mayra pulled over and Bianay said the most beautiful prayer.....asking for God’s protection and that we would be a blessing to those who came our way that day. They all have such a truly heartfelt love for and connection with God. It always inspires and humbles me.

Mayra drove 2 hours to San Luis and then we transferred to pickup trucks driven by the social workers from the municipality. Road was extremely bumpy! Took another 2 hours to arrive. Jornada was in a school – the usual makeshift clinic set up. Not ideal but it worked. I did about 50 paps. All were read that day and everyone received results. Arrangements were made by Sandra to have the women brought to our clinic for treatments this week.

None of the women spoke Spanish. It was quite comical trying to get them to take off their underwear and get into “the position”! A lot of wrestling went on! Most of them had never had any kind of pelvic exam so it was quite an effort....kind of amazing that they even came. Points to the great work our team is doing.

One case of what looked to be invasive cancer. She will come back for LEEP on Monday. Sandra has everything arranged with the other social workers. She has specific days arranged where people from different communities come here and the municipality pays for their transportation.

Got back around 8:30 pm. Mayra never complains about having to do all that driving! She is always so humble in all the amazing things she accomplishes.

Saturday May 6

*Short day in the clinic. Got done around 1:30 PM. Did about 15 follow up treatments. One of the patients asked if she could take a picture with me. Then she literally started crying and said that her mother died when she was 8 months old and she thinks that God has sent her people in her life to watch over her and that I am one of them! Made me cry....*

*Another little story – a patient came in (60 years old). She is a midwife in a remote village. I asked her to tell me some good OB stories that she had! She talked about times when there are unexpected twins, when the baby is breech, when they have to get the woman to a hospital (4 hour drive). I asked if there might be anything I could give her. She said she needed a basin, 2 scissors, a clamp and a towel to dry off the baby.....all simple things I had. She was so happy!*

*Being done early gave us a chance to talk at length about everything. We decided to terminate Elder (more below). We also talked about potentially having Sandra oversee the public health projects. Discussed the system we have for paying our staff and how it should be changed (details below). I also said I was concerned about the current living situation for Sandra and Andres. They are both staying in little rented rooms about 5 blocks from the clinic. They share an outdoor with bathroom with many people and it is noisy and dirty. They have no kitchen. They are not complaining but I can't imagine this will be manageable for the long term. Talked about potential options. Possible put in small rooms at our site where they could stay and use the outdoor bathrooms and kitchen in our hostel? We called Camilo and he gave us an idea of where would be a good place for this. He is going to estimate cost. He thought it would be fairly cheap since we wouldn't need plumbing or septic. Just an idea! Something to think about.....*

*We had a phone meeting with Dr. Palma. He agrees to work at our clinic a half day each month (to start...maybe more down the road) to do biopsies. These will be sent to Guatemala City. I am not completely sure that this is the best system but it is worth trying. The cost is Q150 for a biopsy and Q300 for a LEEP. The patients will have the option of paying for this or waiting until I come to do their biopsies and return to the US with them. I'm not concerned that waiting a few months will change their outcomes.*

*We all went for ice cream in the evening. I think one of the "highs" for me this week was when I asked Roxanne if she wanted to go for ice cream. She had been working for hours and hours on the cards and emails for the sponsors and I think she was pooped. When I poked my head in her room and said "Do you want to get some ice cream?", she threw her arms up in the air and screamed "YES!". It was hilarious.*

Sunday May 7, 2023

*Emily, Roxanne and 63 kids went to Tikal (see their reports)*

*I saw patients for follow up treatments*

*Had an interview with Kenneth. He is the one who used to be our guard. Interviewed him as a potential candidate for Elder's job. His experience was not as much as Mayra had thought.*

*The bus arrived back from Tikal around 6:30 PM. Soon after it pulled up, I heard a car crash and saw people rushing toward the road. My heart stopped thinking that it was one of our children! Turned out it was the mom of one of the kids. She was coming to pick up her child and was driving an ATV on the busy road. She was hit by a van that was filled with other people who also had just been at Tikal. Thanks to God, she only suffered minor injuries although the ATV was destroyed. Neither driver had a license. Lots of police on the scene. Kind of scary though it could have been much worse.*

*Monday May 8, 2023*

*Today, we had a group of women with abnormal paps come from San Luis. Most of these women had had paps that were done by their local clinics. Several of those paps were done in 2021 and the women were never notified until now when the municipalities realized that we were willing to do the treatments free of charge.*

*Sandra was responsible for arranging all of this. She has been working with the Social Workers in different areas to see how we can work with the local health districts. Most of these women had high grade dysplasias so I was able to do LEEP conizations on them. One had a possible early invasive cancer.*

*All of the women were indigenous and did not speak Spanish. The nurse (Juanita) in charge in that region came with them – she speaks Quechí). She was extremely helpful both when we had our jornada in San Luis and also on this day. She herself does paps in their clinic. She worked with me throughout the day and I taught her some ways she could improve the way she does paps. She also stayed for the procedures so she will be able to better educate the women on what will happen. She said they do about 500 paps a year and she said it would be wonderful if all those paps could be sent to us to read. She said usually, they don't get any results when the paps are sent to Poptun to read.*

### ***Meeting with Elder***

*For a variety of reasons, we decided to let Elder go. This decision was a long time coming – too many things happened especially over the last year and a couple of things on this trip made it obvious that he needed to leave*

- 1. Over the last couple of years, there has been less involvement with the families on our chicken and vegetable projects. Years ago, Ismael and Elder had gone out to women's homes to help them get substantial vegetable gardens growing. That had stopped doing that and over the last few years, they had been invited to use our own land to grow vegetables but slowly, that also stopped. Over the last couple of years, there were*

*chicken projects where the women were involved but often, the chickens died or the women chose to not be involved. Elder always blamed it on their lack of interest or laziness but we began to wonder if he was to blame or the women were not sufficiently incentivized.*

- 2. The fish farms have all failed over the last year. Initially, they were very successful providing a cheap source of great protein to people in the area and for the kids. We had hoped that Elder would use this project as a great teaching opportunity for the kids but that didn't happen. Over the last year, all the fish have died that were put in the tanks. Elder blamed it all on the fact that MAGA was no longer helping us and that he was buying them from places far away and it was impossible for the fish to withstand the distance. Mayra has said she did not think that the tanks were sufficiently cleaned. For whatever reason, the program failed.*
- 3. Elder knew from the beginning that the purpose of these programs was to teach the children and families. He rarely involved them. In February, we met with him and made it clear this was mandatory. Then, without even coordinating anything with Seiner, he just walked into the classrooms and had children work with him. It was very disruptive to the classes. Another example of his lack of respect toward his co-workers*
- 4. From the beginning, he had no interest in driving the vehicles. When we got insurance for the vehicles, we were told that drivers had to have a certain "b" type of license to drive larger vehicles likes vans and pick-ups. Apparently, Elder had a "c" license which was because of the way he got his license. With the "c" license, you do not have to take a test. You just get it and if you have a good driving record for 2 years, you can upgrade to the "b" license. We more recently found out from Lucky that because we are an organization, any of our drivers can drive our vehicles if they have any license. He still really didn't want to drive. He came to Mayra with a document that he had written up that he wanted her to sign stating that he would never be responsible if there was an accident. Also, Mayra told me this week that Elder told her that he has a testicular hernia and it is uncomfortable for him to drive the van. He has no problem driving his motorcycle or working in the fields but feels uncomfortable driving the van.*
- 5. Mayra states he has been repeatedly disrespectful to her. I personally witnessed him yelling at her in front of me and Hector Garcia (the cytologist) about the driving issue. Mayra said that he more recently had a huge confrontation with one of our teachers (Rossi) where he was yelling at her so much that the other staff heard it and told me about it.*
- 6. He has not installed any stoves or distributed any water filters this year and very few last year.*
- 7. Spends a lot of time growing flowers that are pretty but not doing anything to advance our mission.*
- 8. The greenhouse produces great plants that bring in some money for SewHope but definitely do not cover costs and again, the students are not involved enough.*

9. *He has not followed up in the communities to see if the large water filters are functioning.*
10. *He has not followed up with the families who have stoves to see if they are working.*
11. *This week, I noticed that there was a lot of water leaking from the water tank on top of the outdoor bathrooms. I asked Mayra about it and she said it was a problem with the “checkvalve”. A substantial amount of water was being lost. She said she had told Elder about it 2-3 weeks ago and he had done nothing. I asked her to call him (it was Saturday) and tell him that I wanted it fixed. He came and fixed it in about 30 minutes.*
12. *Bianay told me that she had asked Elder why he didn’t bring his wife to our clinic for her paps. He said its because he has heard that women bleed a lot after they have paps with us and that we just want them to have hysterectomies. He said he doesn’t trust our program.*

*I talked with Randy and he agreed Elder needed to go. We also called Lucky and she wholeheartedly agreed.*

*Mayra wanted me to be at the meeting when we talked to him because she said that he doesn’t really consider her in charge of him. He thinks he reports to Randy. So Mayra and I and Carmen met with him in the hostal. Mayra basically said that she and the SewHope leadership felt that it would be best if he leaves because he is not fulfilling our mission with public health projects.*

*He immediately started talking furiously. He said he accepts this and he is fine with leaving. He said “For me, it is good if I leave”. And then he immediately said that he demands the money that he is due. We told him that our plan was to follow the guidelines for giving an employee what he is due when he leaves. He just kept talking on and on about how he is happy to leave but he suspects that SewHope is corrupt and that we will not give him what he is due. He became a contractual employee with us in May 2018 but he thinks he should also be paid for the year before that when he worked as a “day worker” with us. Mayra and Carmen both said that he knows full well that his benefits are based on when he had a contract with us. Mayra and Carmen both said that it is very common that organizations do not pay their staff when they leave in circumstances like this but that in reality, it is not legal and of course, SewHope will follow the legal guidelines. Elder also said that he had been let go from 2 previous jobs and they had not paid him.*

*When the conversation was over, we asked him to give us his keys. He said he needed to go to the bodega to get them. Then he was back there for some time talking with Marcelo. Finally, Mayra had to go back to ask him to leave which he finally did.*

*We did meet with Marcelo a few hours later to say that we were hoping that he would stay on with us which he said he would.*

*Lessons learned*

1. *Mayra and myself and Carmen had a long discussion about the way our staff are paid. We had a board meeting with Lucky and Tita and Rudy several years ago to discuss the manner in which we would contract with employees. Apparently, in Guatemala, you can contract with them by year or indefinitely. Basically, the “yearly” option means that their contract is just for the year and then you “rehire” them for the next year. With this system, you pay them their “indemnization” (the equivalent of one months salary) at the end of each year.*

*For some reason, we had decided at that meeting that it was much better to just have long term contracts where they are paid their indemnization when they leave. They do not receive this if they resign and so she said it is a better way to insure that staff don't resign easily. However, we can see now that there are major drawbacks to the way we are doing it*

- a. *If a staff member wants to leave, they are unlikely to resign since they won't get the indemnization then. It seems that this is what happened with Elder. He did increasingly poorer work and ultimately, we had to let him go. We can see that it would be much better to make it easier for someone to leave if they really don't want to work here.*
  - b. *The indemnization includes one month's pay for each year worked. Also, 30 days pay plus a percentage of the July and December bonuses. The payment for the monthly salary is based on the current salary. So, in Elder's case, we will have to pay him at his current rate – not what he was making when he first started. You can see that as we increase salaries, the amount can be substantial over time.*
  - c. *If we were a large business, we would be investing this retirement money which would hopefully be making money over time – just like any retirement program. But because we do not have the funding to do this, it will cost us so much to pay out staff over time.*
  - d. *Other problem is that the truth is that we cannot guarantee that SewHope will continue to have significant donations over time so possibly we would not have the funding to pay out this indemnization in many years to come. For that reason, Carmen said that non-profits rarely pay the way we have been doing. It is unfortunate that we did not realize all of this but we were acting on the advice of our Guatemalan board members.*
  - e. *We can change the way we do this now but will have to wait until the end of the year. We will have to pay out the indemnizations for all the staff which will be substantial but will save us in the long run.*
2. *I think all of this also shows that Mayra needs to be a stronger leader. She really did want to let him go almost a year ago but was not very clear to us about this. I told her that if she is to succeed in this role, she has to be more vocal about her thoughts regarding staff and all issues. I think we also have to have very clear goals and expectations of staff and hold them accountable if projects don't succeed. If she is really the Director there, then she has to be accountable.*

3. *As a Board, we probably also need to supervise more. We had made it pretty clear in February that we expected certain things to be done and they weren't (like installing stoves, etc)*

*Mother's Day Celebration – Quite an event! See report from Emily and Roxanne*

### ***Tuesday, May 9, 2023***

*"Lunch and Learn" – see report from Roxanne and Emily*

*Saw more patients for treatments (In total this week, we did almost 200 paps/treatments)*

*Spent time working on plans for the new Cytology lab/school. Reviewed the draft plans that Hector had sent for the lab. Worked on the budget. Discussed air conditioning, needs, etc*

*Left clinic at 6Pm for TAG flight to Guatemala City*

*Wednesday, May 10*

*6am flight to Dallas*

*Follow-up from trip (We should make sure these things are done at our next board meeting with mayra)*

1. *Need to finish the budget for the cytology clinic/lab and have it submitted to Rotary in Guatemala on Tuesday, May 16. Mayra will send Anne the complete packet of drawings and cost estimates of all that we will need to purchase. Hector and Mayra have already found specific desks/microscopes/supplies/chairs, etc that we will need and we have cost estimates that will be submitted to Rotary.*
2. *Ensure that the clinic remains open throughout the week*
3. *Follow up with the Director in Poptun about whether paps can be sent to us from San Luis. Continue to work with other areas to see if they will also do this. Follow up with Dr. Ochoa*
4. *Better define what Andres will be teaching in the classes regarding basic biology. He is currently not busy enough doing paps to justify full time work. On average, doing about 50 paps a week*
5. *Await budget from Camilo about cost of installing rooms for staff*
6. *Follow up to make sure that Dr. Palma will be coming each month. He said he will start in June*
7. *Where are we with licensing lab/school. What still needs to be done?*
8. *Consider better ways to advertise for our clinic in general and for our jornadas.*

9. *Need to plan dates for November trip. Cost of flights is currently prohibitive - \$1500-\$2000! Need to look at other options....going through Cancun possibly?*
10. *Need to specifically outline what needs to be done to maintain the grounds.*
  - a. *The" clavel " fence that is around some of the property looks great and provides privacy. That needs to be planted in all of the other areas.*
  - b. *Pick up trash in front of the clinic*
  - c. *At some point, the school needs to be repainted – looks very faded*
  - d. *Leveling of ballast and soil around the school*
  - e. *Consider some kind of playground for the children*

### *Public health Projects*

1. *For now, Carmen thinks she can oversee the public health projects. Will have her set up a meeting with Randy and Public health committee to review. She has experience in this in her previous jobs. She seems to have a lot of good ideas. With what we will have to pay for indemnizations this year, it might be best not to replace Elder's position for now. If Carmen is good at leading, probably most of the work can be done by Marcelo and the guards.*
2. *How will families be involved?*
3. *Need to move forward with stove installation*
4. *Need to check on water filters in communities.*
5. *What should happen with greenhouse?*
6. *Should we continue planting of vegetables/fruits?*