

Trip Report
Oct 13 – 25, 2021
Anne Ruch, Tim Kuhn

Wed, Oct 13

Arrived in Flores. Went to store to buy food for the week. When we arrived, Melanie had made me a birthday cake (for my birthday in August!) so we enjoyed that. Put stuff away and hit the sack!

Thursday, Oct 14

Stayed at clinic. Busy seeing patients non-stop from 7-3.

Several treatments from abnormal last May. One woman came in with a full blown cancer. It was heartbreaking – the usual story – first baby at age 14. 4 children – 2 grown. Husband left her and is in U.S. Both of her parents are dead. No money. No way to get to Guatemala City for treatment (thought it probably wouldn't have helped). We prayed together. Lots of tears. So difficult to understand how some just get a different set of cards in this life.

Bad news – my old ultrasound machine broke. Picture is too fuzzy.

Today, Mayra had arranged for a technician from Guatemala City to come up to see if he could fix the other ultrasound I had brought last year. He said it would cost too much to fix it. He quoted me over Q400,000 for a new one and when I said I only had Q200,000, he found one at that cost! However, the more I think about it, I think I just need a very basic portable one – might order it from China.

Then we had late lunch. Tim and Mayra went into town to pick up the suitcases that were delayed in coming and bought a few electrical items. I stayed behind to work on my grant for the clinic at home.

Friday Oct, 15

Got up early to run. Already hot by 5AM! The sunrise is beautiful and the “rush hour” is usually over by 5:30!

Started seeing patients at 7 and busy till about 2. Lots of new patients and follow ups. The sad story of the day was the woman who came in and broke into tears. She said that she heard I was “nice” and maybe I could help her. Apparently, she had COVID 3 months ago and was home in bed and some guy broke in and raped her. She is a single mom of 2 boys aged 20 and 13. Husband is gone – no money.

Says she went to a pharmacy and they gave her a prostaglandin hormone to induce an abortion but it didn't work. She was 13 weeks. Of course, I couldn't help her with abortion but I just listened and we talked for a long time and I think she just accepted the reality that she will be having a baby and maybe she can somehow learn to accept this horrible situation.

Then, I had a short meeting with Mayra, Elder and Santos about their work. We talked about the problems they are facing with the public health projects. No one wants to pay for the stoves

but if we give them for free, then they don't care for them. Same thing with ecofilters. I can see they are as frustrated as I am.

They feel that their greenhouse is going well but we talked about whether this and the hortalizas are the best use of their time and if they are making a big impact on the families. They sell the plants much cheaper to the families than they can get them in nurseries. Also, everything is organic which they are very proud of. They have not been able to include the children much in the programs because of COVID. We are all going to think about this more over the coming days and talk about it more in a few days.

Then Mayra had a man come who has a company that installs electricity into homes. We spent about an hour talking about options. Tim is working away at it on the computer – talking to Tim Reeder about options.

Oct 16

Ran 4 miles

Clinic not too busy. A bit frustrating that there are not more people. Mayra says that the municipality won't work with us now because of COVID so they didn't do much to arrange jornadas. But the clinic was steady for about 5 hours

I did see several follow up abnormal and I guess it felt good to know that in truth, there will be some people saved from a premature death from cancer.

Tim went to into town a couple of times to get more supplies to get ready to start putting in the wiring into the school.

I worked on the ACTAS – we actually had never put in the minutes or documents into it. This is a required book for our Guatemalan non-profit status. Located minutes from all our Guatemalan Board meetings and translated them into Spanish. Also figured out how to access all the biopsy and pap reports directly from this program at Propath. That will make it a lot easier in the future when we have a patient who needs to bring a biopsy report with them.

Rossie Chiquin and her mom came to visit. She was a student here for many years – one of the originals in Orfe's group. Randy and I had sponsored her for many years and she her mom continue to be so grateful. They brought me these beautiful hand crocheted placemats that her aunt made. She is 23 now and finishing up her masters in education. She would be delighted to come work in our school when it opens!

Had a long talk with Rudy today about his program with the public health projects. He said he will send me the documents they have the people sign and the information he gives groups when they come from the U.S. to install the stoves. Said he will come here to Peten in early December to work with Elder on how to better engage the communities.

Oct 17 (ran 4 miles – are you seeing a pattern?!)

Saw patients in the morning. A lot of follow ups from last Feb and May.

Story of the day! Woman tells me that she keeps getting these fungal lesions on her skin. When she treats them, they go away but then come back. I ask if she has animals in the house. She says yes. What kind of animals? Oh.....dogs, cats, chickens.....oh a couple of pigs!!

Saw a woman with a terrible breast abscess that I was able to take care of. Its so fulfilling to take care of abscesses!

Mayra and I met for a couple of hours and talked about some administrative things that need to be improved on.

I pulled up a document about the Guatemala labor laws and she and reviewed them. I think we are following everything except Mayra and I didn't realize that when people are out sick for more than 3 days, they are paid by IGSS. However, the law states that if IGSS doesn't pay (and they often don't) then we have to pay. However, we only pay at 50%. We didn't realize that with Sylvia and gave her full pay.

Below are the items we reviewed. Mayra is going to put them into a document and give them to every staff member so they know what they are and are not entitled to.

Payroll

Salaries are paid on a monthly, bi-monthly, weekly, daily, or hourly basis, depending on the type of work conducted by the employee and what is agreed upon in the employment contract.

13th Salary

Salaried employees should receive two bonuses a year, equivalent to 1 months' salary each as a 13th and 14th-month payment. The Bonus 14 ("Bono 14") is payable in July of each year, and a Christmas bonus is payable in December.

Working Hours

General

The standard working day in Guatemala is 8 hours per day, 44 hours per week, and cannot exceed 12 hours per day. However, working hours do not apply to high-level executives or domestic employees.

Night-time work has a maximum of 36 hours per week, with six hours a day between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. If the shift is mixed with day and night-time work, the maximum is increased to 42 hours per week.

Overtime

Any hours over 44 hours in one work week is considered overtime and is paid at a rate of 150.00% of the regular pay.

Leave

Paid Time Off

Employees are entitled to 15 days of vacation after their first year of service.

Public Holidays

There are 12 public holidays which were all reviewed and which we are giving to our staff

Date		Name	Type
1 Jan	Friday	<u>New Year's Day</u>	National holiday
	Thursday	<u>Maundy Thursday</u>	National holiday, Christian
	Friday	<u>Good Friday</u>	National holiday, Christian
	Saturday	<u>Easter Saturday</u>	National holiday, Christian
	Sunday	<u>Easter Sunday</u>	Observance, Christian
1 May	Saturday	<u>Labor Day</u>	Observance
28 Jun	Monday	<u>Army Day Holiday</u>	National holiday
15 Sep	Wednesday	<u>Independence Day</u>	National holiday
20 Oct	Wednesday	<u>Revolution of 1944</u>	National holiday
1 Nov	Monday	<u>All Saints' Day</u>	National holiday, Christian
24 Dec	Friday	<u>Christmas Eve</u>	Half day holiday
25 Dec	Saturday	<u>Christmas Day</u>	National holiday, Christian
26 Dec	Sunday	<u>Boxing Day</u>	Half day holiday
31 Dec	Friday	<u>New Year's Eve</u>	Half day holiday

Sick Days

Sick pay will be paid either by the Guatemalan Institute of Social Security (Instituto Guatemalteco de Seguridad Social) (IGSS) under its own regulations or by the employer if the IGSS regulated benefits do not cover the employee, the illness, or the injury.

The length and payment calculation of sick pay is dependent on the employee's length of employment:

- 2–6 months of employment entitles the employee to one month of paid sick leave, paid at a rate of 50% of the employee's regular salary.
- 6–9 months of employment entitles the employee to two months of paid sick leave, paid at a rate of 50% of the employee's regular salary.
- 9+ months of employment entitles the employee to three months of paid sick leave, paid at a rate of 50% of the employee's regular salary.

In addition, the employer may seek to fill the employee's duties temporarily, which can be terminated upon the employee's return.

Maternity Leave

Pregnant employees in Guatemala are generally entitled to 12 weeks of maternity leave starting from 30 days before the expected due date.

In the event of a miscarriage or stillbirth, the mother is entitled to 42 days of paid leave.

Paternity Leave

There are no provisions in the law regarding paternity leave.

Parental Leave

There are no provisions in the law regarding parental leave.

Other Leave

Depending on the collective agreement/employment contract terms, an employee may be allowed additional leave types, on approved between the employer and employee, for the following:

- *Bereavement leave– employees are entitled to three days of paid leave in the event of the death of an immediate member of the family.*
- *Wedding– employees are entitled to five days paid leave for their wedding.*
- *Labour union leader– a union's executive committee member, is entitled to up to 6 days of paid leave to carry out union duties.*

Termination

Termination Process

The termination process varies according to how the employment agreement and collective agreement are in place and is based on the type of contract and reason for termination.

Notice Period

When the periods of notice are determined in accordance with the Employment Contracts Act, the employer, and the employee may agree on the periods of notice (no longer than six months). Collective agreements may contain provisions on periods of notice. If the periods of notice in the collective agreement differ from the statutory periods of notice, the employer and the employee must observe the periods of notice laid down in the collective agreement.

The amount of notice is dependent on the length of service and reason for termination. If the employer terminates the contract, the notice period is as follows:

- *For employees with employment service of up to 6 months- 1 weeks' notice*
- *For employees with between 6 months and 1 year employment service- at least 10 days' notice*
- *For employees with between 1- and 5-years employment service – at least 2 weeks' notice*
- *For employees with more than five years employment service- 1 months' notice*

Severance Pay

Employees receive severance if they are terminated without just cause and have 30 days to make a claim to a court. Should the employer be unable to justify the reason in court, the employee receives up to 12 months of severance pay but cannot return to their previous job/role/employer.

Also, employers cannot terminate trade union members, female employees during pregnancy or maternity leave, or immediately after childbirth, and those during a collective dispute or illegal shutdown of a business.

Should employees be terminated in the event of force majeure, death, or economic reasons, the severance payment is generally agreed at an amount equal to between two days and four months of the regular salary rate of pay.

Probation Period

The probation period in Guatemala is generally two months.

VAT

General

The standard rate of VAT in Guatemala is 12.00%.

In addition to the above, Mayra is going to work on the following this month:

1. Put together folder for each employee
 - Folder will include
 - Name, Birthday
 - Day they began working with us
 - Current salary
 - Proof of vaccines
 - Current license for professionals
 - Police record
 - Records of tardiness, days missed from work, problems
 - Records of when exceptionally good things are done
2. Put together Guatemala labor rules and hand it out to all staff so that they understand what happens if they are sick and what exact holidays and vacation they are entitled to.
3. Pharmacy Inventory – We had a protocol for this but they have not been following it

4. Inventory for plants (She will work with Elder on this)
5. Devise a financial policy about how money is handled each day. How financial books are balanced each day. When money is deposited in the bank
6. Design and order the new sign for outside the clinic

We also came up with a written plan for the cervical cancer prevention program for 2022
Policy for Pap tracking and patient notification

Goal for 2021 is 2,500. 1250 done during jornadas

1. Paps that Mayra does:

Mayra will let me know 1 month before a trip if I need to bring any supplies or stains.

She will coordinate with other organizations such as Ixmucane, Ixquiq, San Andres, Municipalidad de Chal, Municipalidad de San Francisco, woman who works with organizations for women. (Onega Luna)

Beginning in November, one jornada each month.

Advertisement

Put on facebook that patients can come every day for paps.

Rotulo

Signs in stores in Santa Ana

Information for Social Workers in Municipalities.

Mayra will try to coordinate jornadas well in advance

She will read her paps within 1-2 weeks of doing them. Patients will all be notified. In the event of an abnormal, they will told to get follow up at a private clinic or they can wait until U.S. team comes

Mayra will send Anne results of the paps she does each month

2. Paps that Anne does

- Goal is to have results in 7-8 weeks to Mayra. Results will include recommendations for follow-up
- If paps were done in a village, the letters with results will be given to the Centro de Salud
- All patients will be called with results. If no answer, a second try.
- If result is abnormal, will call the Centro de Salud or Social Worker to help contact the patient
- We will tell patients that if they have not received results within 8 weeks, they need to contact us.

Tim spent the day working on wiring the clinic

Monday, Oct 18 – ran/walked 2 miles (Loser!)

Dr. Susanna came to visit this morning. I wanted to get together with her to see if there might be any ways we could collaborate. She brought a PA with her who is going to be working at her clinic in Las Cruces for the next couple of years. She recommended that we look at _____ for possible medical volunteers.

She is definitely interested in continuing to use our facility for training her health promoters. Also, she would train a health promoter from Santa Ana if we identified someone. There is a promoter named who might be interested in doing the cytology training.

Clinic was fairly busy until 2PM. Patients were extremely grateful.

I had a meeting with Elder and Santos for about an hour. Seems like there is a little tension with a few things and we are going to have a meeting before I leave.

They brought up several ideas about how we could get the families to be more involved.

1. Need to stop charging people if the projects don't work. Said it makes them too afraid to invest
2. Include people outside of the families in our program.
3. They already have ideas of great families who would love to get a stove and would participate in the agricultural programs. They will contact them and maybe we can visit on Wednesday

Definitely, they feel that they need regular meetings with Randy and Tim and anyone interested in public health projects.

Today, Mayra's son, Julio, came to help Tim with the wiring.

Tuesday, October 19, 2021 (didn't run – prayed instead – more refreshing!)

Clinic was MUCH busier today. I asked people a lot about how they knew we were here and they said their family member or friend came this week and told them about us. I can see that if we had an American team all the time, they would be very busy.

Had some really interesting and challenging patients.

One 68 year old lady came with her son. She was all upset because she thought her uterus was falling out (which it was). When I told her it wouldn't kill her and that there were some simple things we could do, she was SOOOOO happy! She came

back an hour later and gave me a big hug and told me that when I come back in February, she is going to bring me a chicken!

Another 18 year old girl came in looking like she was 9 months pregnant. Turned out she had this monster ovarian cyst (at least 40 cm) that was more than likely a cancer.

Another 70 year old with cervical cancer. She had gone to a general gynecologist in Santa Ana who had operated on her (although that was COMPLETELY the wrong thing to do). When he opened her, he realized he couldn't do anything, so he just closed her and kept her Q8000. The level of corruption here is hard to fathom.

Saw patients steadily from 7-4:15.

Then we had a meeting with these 2 people from an organization that works for Women's rights and talked about ways we could collaborate. They were excited about what we are doing and definitely will help us.

Then Board meeting.....

Then spaghetti!

Laundry and now bed!!! Pretty full day.

Wednesday, Oct 20 (Ran 3 – think I'm getting slower – doesn't seem possible that the Marathon was just 1 week ago!)

Clinic gets busier every day.

One woman brought in her 7 year old son with nephrotic syndrome – as if I had a clue! He has a doctor in Guatemala City that he was seeing every month until the pandemic.....so its been almost 2 years. I at least convinced her to bring him back down there.

One woman with cervical cancer who was completely mismanaged by a general gynecologist here in Peten. It would have been a big law suit in the U.S. but not here....she has no recourse.

After the clinic, I spent time talking to Seiner. He's really excited about the school. Asked him what he thought about having Rosalin Chiquin work here as a teacher. He thought it was a good idea because he always hoped the idea was that we would be able to hire some of the kids who came through the program. Also, Camilo's daughter is at the same level as Seiner and is interested. I was thinking that maybe both of them could use this time to work on Khan Academy.

Also, Mayra said that if we are going to have a Parvulos, then we need to hire a teacher specialized in this. It's the rule here.

Dr. Deisy and her fiancée came to visit. Talked to them about helping us look for a doctor and they said they would

Thursday, Oct 21 (ran 3)

Left at 0630 for San Francisco.

Saw 96 patients! As you can imagine, not “quality” visits but we got the paps done!

Came back and I brought Melanie to the mall to buy her some gifts for her birthday. We had a lot of fun.

Came back and packed up for our jornada tomorrow. Also the patient with the breast abscess came back and needed it drained again – gross!

Now organizing all these paps!

Friday, Oct 22

Today, we went to El Mango and had a jornada. The people in the clinic and “Ministerio de Salud” out there are notoriously lazy so I wasn’t too surprised that we only had 22 patients come. I’m sure the staff did little to advertise us coming and besides if many came, it would have been more work for them.

Turned out to be a good thing though because it gave Mayra and I a chance to do a few needed things. We went to the Electric company in Santa Elena and found out the next steps to getting a new transformer put in.

Then we met with Dr. Claudia – a potential doctor for the clinic (more on that later) Also, I had to get my COVID test for the trip back.

Funny.....for a lot of days I felt like I was here forever, that it was the longest trip I ever had here. Tonight, I can’t believe that tomorrow is the last day. Sometimes I just love being here so much.....there are so many moments that bring me closer to God, moments where I feel like I get to peer into what is truth, moments when I feel like I am worthy.

Here, of course, it is not normal life. I don’t have to cook, pay bills, worry about my (grown) kids, take out the garbage, all of it. Yes, the days are very, very full but they are full in a different way. It’s kind of like you just wake up and let God lead the way. You never know what is going to happen. You show up in a village and there might be 100 people and there might be few – and you just accept it for what it is. And then I travel with Mayra and we talk a lot about big things – like how hard it is to be the so called leader and how soul crushing it is when things don’t go as you had hoped. And we talk about big hopes and big dreams. We talk about things with our own families that are sometimes difficult. In some ways, we are little counselors for each other. We laugh a lot. Sometimes we are in the middle of a paragraph and then we laugh because we realize that we have no idea what the other one just said.

Sometimes I can't believe how people trust me. A patient will walk in in the middle of one of those super busy days and they know there are fifty people waiting. And they clearly feel so bad "interrupting" me but they just want to know if the pain they feel somewhere in their body is normal. They want to make sure they don't have an illness that might kill them. They want to know if there is anything they can do to make their bodies feel better. Sometimes when I tell them that the pain in their breast is not a cancer or that they don't have an STD or that their baby really is ok, they just hug me and thank me so so gratefully when in reality I have done nothing.

And sometimes they come in with big problems. And when I actually do something that fixes their big problem it is ALWAYS because other people have been able to help – I just was the middleman that made the connection.

And then there are the times I am just with Seiner or with Elder and listen to their concerns (or what I THINK I'm hearing in Spanish!). And I am always so in awe of them ! I think they know that and so we always part both feeling really good about each other.

When I drive around here, I always think how sad it is that a country that is so incredibly beautiful is so dark because of centuries of abuse. The countryside here is shockingly beautiful but somehow it always seems tainted. You always feel that some police car is going to stop you or maybe that you'll end up in an accident because no one follows rules. You can't just go for a nice walk because people in the houses would peer out and wonder who you are. Or you worry you might be kidnapped or something. At my age, there are still obnoxious comments when I'm out running – I can't even imagine what it would be like if I was 25 and beautiful!

Yes, it is a "third world country". Nothing gets done easily. Corruption and lies are too common BUT they are not everywhere. There are the Camilo's of the world who are not only honest but who work at a level I have never seen of anyone in the U.S. Although all of his workers are done with the big job now, I sometimes find him in the school just making little things perfect. He has to be the most humble person I have ever met. He is so thin and quiet and yet, all the workers have complete respect for him and it often doesn't seem possible that he can lift and do the things he does.

This evening, Elder and Marcelo and I went to visit 2 "families" that they are going to install the stoves in.

The first was a woman (maybe age 65?) who lives alone. Her husband died many years ago and she has grown children. I think a couple of them live in the area but she does live alone.

Her "house" is 2 rooms. No windows although the big space between the tin roof and the simple boards lets in some light. No electricity. One room had a mattress on

a floor with some clothes and a blanket laying on it. There was a “table” (piece of wood with 2 legs holding it up) that had some dishes and cups on top. She walked with no shoes on her uneven dirt floor. You then stepped into the “kitchen” – a smokey area with the open fire going and one tortilla on top of it. A pila on one side loaded up with some pots and dishes.

Elder introduced me as “Dr. Anna” who came from the United States and was with an organization that had a lot of “projects” to help the people. I felt completely embarrassed. I wanted to say “No, actually ...this is Dr. Anna who lives in a big, beautiful house and has everything she wants and has a beautiful family who have been given everything they need....and she doesn’t even understand how she has the right to step into your house and tell you what she thinks you need”!!!

He described the stoves and the water filters. She seemed like she had no idea what he was talking about but when he asked if she was interested, she had a big, big smile and said she would love that and then looked so gratefully at me. It was almost as if she just loved me for being another human being who cared to visit her and she wanted to make me feel good! We talked about her going to visit Elder’s house to see what the stove was like and maybe she could talk to Elder’s wife to see how she liked it. She smiled graciously and said that she would love that.

I just couldn’t imagine being her. Living in this dark, dark place. I wondered what it was like when there was a storm, what it was like after 6Pm when the sun went down and there was nothing to read or watch or do. I thought about how I would feel so frightened. Bugs everywhere. What would you do when you had to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night? What would you do if you were sick? Do they never get sugar cravings? It must get old just eating beans and tortillas!

The second “family” was even worse. Their “house” was a one room tin shack. The “door” was open as we passed it and I glanced in and just saw a bunch of clothes laying on a filthy mattress on the floor. Again, no windows. Then we walked over to the “kitchen” area next to it. The smoke in this place was even more heavy and my eyes were burning quickly to the point of tearing. There was an “upholstered” chair in the area with most of the upholstery part missing. The husband was about 5 feet tall and probably weighed 80 pounds. One of his eyes was gone and you could tell he was barely able to see from the other. His clothes were a bit too big on him but they were clean and his shirt was interesting – it was kind of a pink/purple with big red accents and an emblem that said “caterpillar”. He and his wife were so very kind to us. They immediately brought us these little plastic stools so we could sit down. I thought about how often in the U.S. we are too busy to invite friends (much less strangers!) into our homes. We worry if there is a small mess and someone might think we are not perfect.

Anyway, Elder again gave his little speech about the projects and their eyes looked a little glazed over. Of course, yes, the smoke in the room was horrible and this method of cooking is disastrous in so many ways, but from what I could see everything was disastrous from my point of view. But what really struck me was wondering what was it like from their point of view? Maybe they had lots of pleasant moments in their day. Maybe they loved each other deeply and things weren't that bad? Maybe this was just their lot in life and they never felt sorry for themselves? Or maybe they suffered every day.....maybe they really suffer and all that gets them through is that they believe that there is a better life after death. Wow...how sad that would be.

So I'm going on and on....trying to make sense of it all. The longer I'm here, the more confused I get. Oh....one really funny thing. I find that no matter where I am here if I tell people about the clinic and I mention that we do "papanicolaus", they first look completely embarrassed. I then I make a joke about it and we all end up in uproarious laughter. Somehow it is a great equalizer...the idea of having to take your clothes off and be examined by another person is first embarrassing and then just so funny, you can't stop laughing when you think about it! So yes, myself and these 2 women did share some true laughter in midst of the surrounding sadness. What's it all about? We all suffer in certain ways and we all laugh about similar things. I guess all I know is that when I'm here, I feel like I'm in the right place....I feel like life is purposeful. And I also know that when I see "homes" like these, it doesn't feel right. It doesn't feel like our God above ever intended that His children would live like this.

Saturday, October 23, 2021

No running!

Went to Centro de Salud in San Andres (about 45 minutes away)

56 paps.

A lot of people wanted "consultas" but there was no time with so many people. We decided that in the future it would be best to do the jornadas first and then people can come to the clinic later in the trip. Also, it gives the community knowledge that we are here

Afterward, the Ministerio de Salud brought us out to lunch.

Then, Singly and I and Mayra went to the "biblioteca" in Flores and I bought about 15 books for the students. Also, I bought so nice planner books for the staff for 2022

Came back and got the paps organized to come home.

Then I had a meeting with Mayra to talk about a bunch of things it would be good for her to do in the coming weeks

We reviewed what we want on the rotulo.

Then we had a meeting with Elder and Marcelo. Talked about the challenges they face with the projects. Discussed lots of options including

1. 5 families have been very happy with the chicken projects. Other families in the program here failed because they didn't do their part. Not too many families are interested.
2. Elder has ideas of local families that would be interested.
3. Mayra suggested focusing on one community like Santa Ana Viejo
4. Talked about problems of rats getting into the seeds.
5. Elder very excited about the vertical gardens – they don't think they are available here in Peten. He definitely wants to explore this.
6. Talked about ways to get the kids more involved in the projects – chicken. Hortilizas, even getting them to grow plants in their homes that could then be brought here to be sold with the other plants in the vivero
7. Talked about agreement that Rudy sent to me that the families sign when they get a stove, water filter and tippy tap
8. Not sure how Rudy gets American groups to install stoves. Elder said it only takes about an hour.
9. Lots of ideas. They will narrow them down in the coming week.