

Salud Juntos Winter 2011 Brigade to Punta Ocote



Sun & Mon 9-10 January 2011

While in Honduras, we learned that not far from the Hotel where we were staying, a 15 passenger van not unlike ours was the target of a shooting where all the occupants were killed. We returned home to the shooting of Congressional Representative Giffords and the realization that while our drinking water may be safe, we are not immune to the same kind of violence. The site of the shooting was "our" Safeway grocery store for many years.

All day yesterday, I reflected on the problems of the people of Honduras, from the perspective of an occasional visitor, thinking about what I could do to promote the safety of our little group.



George (to the right) is a minister who passes through El Progreso the same time as us every year. He runs a series of church sponsored vocational schools in Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. He pulled me to the corner of parking lot to show me what happens when you hit a pothole too fast. *Dale, thank you for managing that risk for us so well- always driving safely, always leaving time to get in before dark.* George went on to describe the general increase in violence urged our continued caution.

We practiced every form of food safety we could think of. We used more hand sanitizer than a modern cruise ship. We didn't eat uncooked vegetables, drink non-bottled water, use ice with our drinks, etc. For the most part, that is- till the last night at Pizza Hut and its "safe" salad bar. Two of our group (both who had the salad bar) suffered the consequences, lasting several days.



Before leaving for the airport, Dale had arranged a tour of the El Progreso Hospital. Our tour was conducted by their equivalent of a PGY-1 who was just coming on duty. During the next 24 hours she expected to see 60 or more patients through the emergency department of all ages, presenting for decompensated diabetes, pneumonia, complications of pregnancy, asthma, trauma, you name it. Thank you, Sessi, for the tour. I hope that you were not too backed up when left.



Dr Roberto Castellanos works at the hospital, and found time on a Sunday morning to host us at his hospital.



The newsletters that you have received earlier this week were penned by the above team of Pat, Thiri, and Matthew. Thank you all, especially Matt for the great wordsmithing. This newsletter is from me.

The Travel home was without incident. The situation "de-Thiri-olated" in Houston when a standby seat came open and Thiri was able to beat us home by about 2 hours.

FOLLOW UP PLANS

Two patients need glasses to be purchased for them, and 14 patients were identified who need cataract surgery and nasolacrimal surgery. We are fortunate to have an donor who established a fund in memory of our colleague Dr Velma Dobson that is used to our international efforts for eye care and education. The income from this endowment will provide for about 5 cataract surgeries this year. Surgery will be provided in



El Progreso at an excellent surgery facility that is fully staffed and provides an ongoing care program for follow up. It is also in keeping with our philosophy of

providing the best care we can on site, but given the annual nature of our visits, not trying to create a surgical experience for our residents. That can come later if they choose to pursue additional international work, through organizations such as See International.

The Salud Juntos organization (www.saludjuntos.org) is a wonderful partner for our group to work with, and we are most grateful for their efforts. If you would like to learn more about the group and how you might help, please either contact me or Salud Juntos through their webmaster (info@saludjuntos.org).

TILL NEXT YEAR

Our residency program will continue its mission to educate doctors to become competent and compassionate ophthalmologists with a capacity to care for the rural and underserved. The partnership with Salud Juntos has provided the means for the residents to see first hand the eye care needs of rural Central Americans, and to participate in the health care of a community on a continuing basis. I hope that this partnership can continue, and that with your help, we can both educate and care for this small community. As you have seen already in two short years, this community has built a clinic, started a hypertension program, enlisted the support of the State to provide continuing nursing presence in the clinic, and hosted numerous visiting teams such as ours to improve the communities health. It was a pleasure to be part of this experience.

Thank you for your help and support!

Joseph M Miller MD MPH
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Geotag (and chicken) of the day:



32.246962,-110.94022