

Guadalupe ENT Clinic September – October 2011

This was our tenth clinic in Guadalupe since my first visit in the spring of 2004. Dr. Stefanie Meyle, an ENT resident from Germany, was invited to work with us a second time. Bill Chisholm, CRNA, and his wife Sherry Chisholm, RN, from Washington State, served as our anesthetist and OR nurse, respectively. Nancy, my wife and former practice manager, assisted with patient management and data entry. Each of our team members brought valuable donated meds and supplies with them. Clinic Coordinator Amanda Anderson, RN, worked the longest hours and was, as always, of invaluable help both in and out of the OR.



Padre Jorge advertised our presence well in advance on the radio, TV and in local newspapers, and many patients came by word of mouth. Some came from as far away as Machala on the coast, and one patient came all the way from Quito! Some came seeking second opinions since they know that we have no financial incentive.



After hours of travel by crowded bus along winding mountain roads, many camp overnight and stand on line at 6 am to be admitted, then wait their turn for hours, sitting on hard wooden benches. But few complain, as they are grateful for the high quality, low cost treatment we offer them. A record 85 patients showed up on the first day.



Patients pay US \$1 for a visit, \$20 for surgery under local anesthesia and \$50 for general, or less in hardship cases. We charge \$600 for a few carefully screened cosmetic rhinoplasties, which helps to offset the overhead cost and balance the clinic budget.



During our four weeks we saw 550 patients, 80 of them under age 17. Over 90 procedures were performed, among them septorhinoplasties, tympanoplasties, mastoidectomies, stapesplasties, and several cleft palate repairs. We continue to promote cleft surgery and I'm hopeful the numbers will continue to increase over time. We also repaired a chainsaw leg wound and removed the occasional benign tumor from hands and feet.



We did 85 audiograms and fitted 30 donated analog hearing aids. Candidates are charged \$50 with the rationale that if they can afford it, they will likely be able to pay the \$1 per week cost of batteries. It was heartwarming to witness a patient's face light up with joy when he or she could suddenly hear again, for the first time in years.



The long-awaited concrete bridge across the river was finally completed earlier this year. The village is very proud of its new, one lane bridge, decorated with murals depicting local culture, flora and fauna. Even Padre Jorge and the nuns are represented. Those coming by car can now park right outside the clinic. Post-op patients no longer have to struggle across the narrow, swaying hanging bridge, competing with horses, cows and bicycles for Darwinian selection.

Our workdays began at 8 am and we were typically busy till 6 pm, with a short lunch break. Weekday meals were provided by Soyla and by Luz, an accomplished cook from Columbia hired especially for our group. The team spirit extends to the kitchen, where we all pitch in for the washing up. In addition to our team, there



was an internist from Vienna and two dentists and a dental technician from Germany. We made our own breakfast in the Residence and ate outside on the veranda, watching the morning fog lift from the valley and surrounding mountains. Due to much rain this year it was particularly lush and green. The weather was mostly overcast but the upside was that it was cooler than usual.



Weekends were spent at the Copalinga Ecolodge just outside of Zamora, bird-watching and hiking to waterfalls at Podocarpus National Park; or at the Yankuam Lodge, where a boat ride up the Nangaritza River leads to dense jungle hiking trails near the Peruvian border.



Mudslides and road wash-outs from all the rain added to the sense of adventure. On the way home we shopped at the colorful Sunday market in Zamora, and ended the weekends with caipirinhas and cooking a shared meal, served by candlelight.





One weekend we all stayed “home” and relaxed. On Saturday night our group went to a local restaurant for locally raised guinea pig and frogs legs. That night everyone was invited to a wedding reception in the village, with a live band and dancing till the wee hours of the morning. Those of us with energy to spare went hiking on local trails.



On October 1st the nuns celebrated the 25th anniversary of their presence in Guadalupe with a special mass and ceremony, followed by a festive meal on the Mission grounds to which the whole village was invited. One evening the volunteers were invited to the convent to thank us for our service and to celebrate a couple of birthdays. The nuns certainly know how to throw a party, with refreshments and music, dancing and singing. They were the best dancers of all!



ENT Guadalupe: Where We Started and Where We’re Going

On the whole the ENT surgery program has matured well over the past eight years. We are now equipped with central suction, electrocautery, a mastoid drill system, a microscope that works, and, thanks to the efforts of Stefanie Meyle, a fiberoptic naso-pharyngoscope and Storz angle optics. A functioning anesthesia machine, medication pump and an air-conditioned OR make work a pleasure.

The sterilization system still has hick-ups, with a capricious autoclave being repaired in Quito. The recent import restrictions of the Ecuadorian government have thrown a wrench in our medical supply system, causing many headaches for Padre Jorge. I’d like to see our post-op patient supervision improved. Since the introduction of cleft palate surgery last year there is a steadily growing response from the community, but we need to get the message out better to the indigenous living in remote villages.

More cleft surgery increases our need for PE tubes for these patients. A steady pipeline of otosclerosis patients coming from the coastal area taxes our supply of stapes prostheses. We need more stents and splints for nasal surgery. We are still lacking reliable post-op oxygen finger monitors. In the coming months we’ll be on a begging tour of the industry for donations of these and other supplies.

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<http://www.guadalupe-ec.org>