

Dentistry for Honduras 2020 Report

Our 3 week project in El Porvenir was very rewarding and successful. It was exhausting and frustrating at times but our teams stuck together and made a huge difference in the lives of so many children. Our 3 teams saw 625 children for cleaning, fluoride treatment, diet and brushing instruction, a new toothbrush and an assessment for the need for urgent dental care. At the clinic we completed 274 appointments, including 186 extractions, 318 fillings, 12 root canals and 6 pulpotomies. That puts our 12 year totals at 6956 children seen, with 1481 extractions, 2150 fillings, 275 root canals, 11 pulpotomies, 14 partial dentures and 4 orthodontic appliances completed.

We ran into a number of problems and worked through them. We have learned from some of these challenges and I feel it will prepare us better for future projects.

One issue was with connecting flights. When we booked our flights, a few of the team members had their flights booked from Halifax to Toronto not linked with their flight to Mexico and to San Pedro Sula. There were a few delayed flights out of Halifax and 3 people missed their connection in Toronto. We ended up having to purchase 3 extra flights to get the team members to Honduras and we are still fighting with Aeromexico for compensation.

Another problem we ran into was not getting to see some of the older students in the first week. The grade 6 teachers were absent most of the week and we had a lot of trouble with medical history and consent forms. Our hygiene numbers were down because of this and we are looking at changing our schedule of schools next year as well as having a very reliable Honduran friend coordinate registration before we arrive.

Our efforts to improve communication and consent with parents was very successful in terms of parents attending appointments and sometimes helping with patient cooperation but there were some issues with making sure everyone had a signed consent form.

We had 2 team members on Week 2 that are professors at Dalhousie University Faculty of Dentistry Dental Hygiene Department. They were a great addition to our team and brought some really fresh new ideas to our project. They are planning to bring several students from their Bachelor of Hygiene program (who already have a hygiene diploma but are upgrading their skill set in the Bachelor program). Their plan is to have at least 1 student in the schools at all times showing their hygiene and nutrition video as well as teaching OHI. We are also considering starting a Sealant program in the schools. They also were able to bring some Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF) so we were able to arrest some caries on some very young patients that would not cooperate for routine restorative procedures.

When we returned to Canada we were contacted by someone from Durham College and they are inquiring about sending some of their hygiene students to Honduras as well. This relationship is in the early stages of discussions but we are hopeful that we can have 3 hygiene

students and possibly an instructor on Week 1 from Durham college and 3 hygiene students and 2 instructors on Week 2 from Dalhousie University.

This year we addressed the issue of our low percentage of volunteers returning for future projects. We focused on finishing our days by 5 pm to give volunteers more of an evening to relax. In past years we would stay in the clinic until 6 or even 7 pm if we had patients to see. We also took Team 2 members to a local resort for an overnight stay. It was a beautiful spot and it gave us an opportunity to get to know each other before we started our big week. Next year we are thinking about having Team 1 and Team 2 meet at the same resort. I paid for the accommodation myself because I didn't feel right having fundraised money used for R &R.

Our shipment of a dental chair, light dental units and other supplies finally arrived in Honduras this week. We are still jumping through hoops to get the equipment delivered to our clinic in El Porvenir. We have people in place to get the equipment set up once it arrives. I don't recommend ever sending anything to Honduras or Guatemala. We did meet a really good dental technician and we are seeing if we can get an autoclave repaired down there instead of having to bring it home or buy a new one.