



Team Quesada 2016

January 30th, Travel/ Unpacking/Set-up Day

The first day started quite early departing from Toronto's International Airport. On arrival to Guatemala City airport, the Team realized instantly the warm climate that was welcoming us. This year's team consisted of 10 Canadians, and 5 native Guatemalans. Of a quite special note, Team Quesada 2016 consisted of 10 first-year volunteers. This is important to the charity, as volunteers are not always available to join the dental mission every year. Having more volunteers with experience is a great asset to the charity. After a 3 hour bus ride, we arrived into Quesada. Five operatories (dental chair, dental unit for drills, and supply tables) were set up, as nightfall appeared. The very long day came to a very fulfilling ending, as our new dental office was completely accomplished.

Sunday January 31st-Thursday February 4th. Quesada Dental Clinic is Open!

The adrenaline starts to run as we drive up to the clinic. We see the long line of children who have been reported to wait 3-4 hours before our 8am start time. The town does not have outside lighting, so the children and their parent are travelling in pitch black darkness. Some children are coming alone, due to unavailability of the parents due to work, or due to the child being parentless. The clinic is designed with medical record taking at the entrance, and then waiting for the next stage called triage. The triage dentist checks over the medical history, and then asks the patient and/or parent the location of the pain or problem.

This week, I was the triage dentist, and my translator when the Spanish got a bit too rapido, was Simon Desrosiers. Following diagnosis and approval of the treatment plan, the local anaesthetic is administered at that time. The child is then brought to the second floor, where the dental treatment takes place. This year the dental teams were Dr. Grazyna Wolf and her regular assistant (in Canada) Noreen, Dr Robert Tracogna and his regular assistant Holly, Dr Helen Hu, and her assistant (for the mission), Baljot, and finally Dr Stephen Mathews and assistant Rani. Some other translators and helpers were Elio, a Guatemalan, who was our handyman, Emilio (a local Quesadian with amazing English!), and the town's psychologist, Maria Jose, who helped because our pop-up dental office used her regular office space. The main focus for the mission is to save permanent (adult) teeth, and not just extractions. Great work was accomplished in this respect, doing twice as many fillings, root canals, and pulpotomies than extractions.

After completion of the dental treatment, the children were directed to the gifts part of the clinic. Toys, pens/pencils, lightly used clothing, as well as toothpaste and toothbrushes were given to the children.

The week was a resounding success, seeing over 250 children, performing over 250 extractions, and over 500 fillings. Twenty pulpotomies and 8 root canals were also performed. Great work by Team Quesada.

Friday, February 5th. Clinic closes, and clinic is dismantled.

Friday's start time was similar to the other previous clinic days, however, due to dangers of travelling after clinic at night, the Team worked a half day. Nevertheless, we saw a lot of children accomplishing a lot of work! Following this, came the sad action of dismantling the entire clinic. That was a bittersweet endeavor, but realizing also, we were packing all equipment and materials for Team #2, a mission in Rio Dulce, Guatemala. Preparation for Team #2, another full week of delivering dental care to really needy children, gave us even more motivation.

We then embarked to a region called Escuintla. There is a project in the Escuintla region called San Gabriele. Our host in Guatemala is an organization called Quesada Solidaria. This organization is run by Eloisa Vega, and her husband, Diego Leon (also our driver, translator, and guardian). San Gabriele is another project that this Quesada Solidaria services. They bring food packages to the residents of San Gabriele, and the surrounding communities. They also help to build more solid homes for the residents. The organization has purchased some land in San Gabriele, and are actively raising funds to build a medical clinic. The concrete walls are up, and a donation has arrived to build the roof. More funds are required to complete the floor, and the interior/exterior finishes.

This is significant to Health Outreach, as this San Gabriele site is a very good opportunity for future dental missions. The need for dental work is great, having examined over 20 children at the site- all of them needed urgent dental care. Team Quesada distributed clothing, toothbrushes, and toys all the excited and happy children. This gave a chance for the Team to observe the living conditions of the poor in Guatemala. I am confident that the next time we return to this area, it will be to deliver much needed dental care.

Night was beginning to fall, and we then made our way to Antigua, a charming town, which used to be the capital of Guatemala. There are volcanoes outlining the city: Fuego, Agua, Pacaya. Beautiful scenery, and a great way to celebrate the wonderful week of work that was performed in Quesada, rural Guatemala.

Saturday, February 6th. Free Day in Antigua

Team Quesada spent the day exploring the many sites of Antigua. From the lookout point, at the Cruce (Cross), overlooking the city, to many hours at the Market area, looking for souvenirs, and special items, to enjoying nice meals, it was unanimously a great time had by all Team members.

Saturday night is also passing the baton night to Team #2. We all congregated at a restaurant to welcome the next team, and to wish them well for their mission in Rio Dulce.

It was a chance to meet up with old acquaintances, including celebrating the 10th mission for Dr Dennis Moren. Afterwards, a fun night of salsa-dancing, led by the founder of the charity, Dr Timothy Lee.

Sunday, February 7th. Return to Toronto

Some last minute picture taking, time at a nice café, and souvenir shopping early Sunday. Our shuttle ride had a great feeling of accomplishment by all Team members. We are already talking about future missions! We arrived around midnight back into Toronto, with some snow welcoming us.... Now back to reality! Hoping to return to Guatemala to help the ninos.....

Signing off for another year,

Dr Daniel Lee, Project Leader, Quesada 2016.