



Peter Yorgin MD

Associate Professor
Loma Linda University
11175 Campus Street,
Loma Linda, CA 92354
E-mail: pyorgin@yahoo.com
Harvest Christian Fellowship

Team Report: One-day Healthcare Mission Trip To Tijuana, Mexico December 9, 2006

There are some days that seem to go fast, even when they start early. Joshua called upon God to give extra hours of daylight so that they could defeat an enemy. In this case, the 16 hours short term healthcare mission trip seemed to go by awfully quickly. I wonder if God took away some time during the day.

One advantage of getting up at 3:50 AM for a one day mission trip to Tijuana is the paucity of traffic at the I-60, I-215 interchange, where there can easily be 30 minute delays.

All of the cars pulled-up close to the sanctuary and disgorged their passengers into the cool night air. The team began to gather, some with coffee or Monster energy drinks in hand, into a loose circle of people. But two were missing. It is always a difficult decision whether or not to call people at 5:00 AM. Phone calls were made, sleepy people were awoken.

After praying, the team of 21 people drove to Chula Vista, just north of the Mexican border. The team was diverse, consisting of four physicians (all Pediatricians), four nurse practitioners, four nurses, three translators and six helpers.

We met with our ministry partner, Kristi Libby, who serves with Mexican Medical Ministries. Approximately 8 people from other churches were also present, including Chris and Lori Bajkiewicz, who were long term Mexican missionaries. Kristi explained how the Medical Brigada was structured and coaxed about 26 peoples into vans.

For those of you who have not been to Tijuana, the town sprawls among the rolling hills adjacent to the Pacific Ocean. One knows immediately when crossing the border that one is in another country. The appearance of the city varies greatly, from nice neighborhoods that would fit in most American cities, to shanty towns. Our team drove along the highway to La Gloria, a small suburb of Tijuana. The area of the Medical Brigada was one where there are no paved streets. From a medical standpoint, virtually all of the people we saw had access to medical care, even if it was difficult to afford.

As the team poured out of the van, we joined in prayer with all of the other people engaged in the Brigada. There were pharmacists, three Mexican physicians, a large evangelism team, a team of church members who acted as guides for the families who attended the Brigada, a large group of people from California churches who set-up the tent city for the Brigada. In the center of the large circle of perhaps 100+ people stood Dr Cesar Tamez who explained how the Brigada would work that day. After a brief devotion, the people were directed into their respective teams. Each person received a color-coded badge that identified their role in the Brigada. Translator, Medical, Medical Assistant, etc. Once signed in and in possession of a badge, the medical team scrambled to the tents to find a place where they could work.



First Harvest Christian Fellowship short-term healthcare mission team
First row (left to right): Ben Rodriguez, Joe Centeno, Katherine Weller, Suzanne Yorgin, Liz Benezu, Anna Bedia;
Second row: Peter Yorgin (team leader), Lisa Yorgin (team leader), Karen Centeno, Krista Yorgin, Caroline Oh, Penee Robertson, Cheryl Michelle; **Third row:** Lynn Rueda, Lori Warzecki; **Fourth row:** Terrie Stevens, Joesph Oh; **Fifth row:** Jonelle Pommeroy, Gerald Williams; Missing: Susanna Michelle, Steven Robertson

Dr Joe Oh, a first year resident at Loma Linda University and Katy Weller RN began performing well child screening. According to Joe, they were quickly overwhelmed with a large number of children (we were told that there were more than 250 attending the Brigada) and the well child screening became more of a triage center. Children were triaged towards either the Carnival of Health or towards the medical tents.

Caroline Oh, one of the nursing practitioners, and Cheryl Mitchell RN settled into one of the tents and began seeing people. When children were brought to the clinic, most had complaints of coughs and cold symptoms. Most women that brought their children had two or more children. Each person was given a form on a piece of paper which was used as a medical document. The person's name, age, vital signs, blood glucose (adults) and blood pressures (adults) was recorded. The physician or nurse practitioner briefly wrote their focused physical examination and then checked a box indicating the person's diagnosis. The prescription was selected on the same sheet, then the patient was sent to the pharmacy with their guide. Patients received free medications, which had been donated by drug representatives, purchased at Costco or donated by visiting teams. It was a very efficient system. Jonell Pomeroy, a pediatric nurse practitioner, worked nearly non-stop from the beginning of the clinic, about 9:15 AM, to the end at 4:00 PM. Jonell was busy caring for a steady stream of pediatric patients.

Dr Gerald Williams was working with Ben Rodriguez. Ben, works with the Spanish ministry of Harvest Christian Fellowship, and was learning how to set-up healthcare mission clinics. He is planning to work with the Harvest Christian Fellowship Global Outreach Health Team to develop a short-term healthcare mission team trip to Jerez, Mexico in June 2007. At the end of the day Dr Williams commented that it was a real delight to see interesting cases and not have to document like he does in the United States (think reams of paperwork for one patient)



The Yorgins, Peter (a doctor), Lisa (a nurse) and their two "helper" daughters Krista (11 years old) and Suzanne (age 5) worked together with their translator Amy. Amy normally works with Mexican Medical Ministries. Providing care for some of the children was a challenge since many are told that if they are bad, that they will be taken to the doctor's for a shot. Talk about bad advertising!

After a while of cleaning ear specula with alcohol wipes, and handing out some of their infrequently used toys to the children, Krista and Suzanne went to work with the volunteers at the Carnival of Health. The Carnival of Health is a program designed for providing children with basic health education. Brushing teeth, washing hands, a nutritious diet and oral rehydration were some of the topics covered. Joe Centeno, one of our team translators was last seen brushing an oversized pair of teeth. Lynn Rueda worked also worked with the children at the Carnival of Health.



The medical problems that people presented with ranged from simple colds to more severe problems. One of the children was referred for further evaluation of a coagulation disorder after she presented with a history of significant bleeding. One woman was pregnant but still had an IUD in place. Several children had scabies, a condition where a small insect burrows into the skin. An older boy had craniosynostosis which is a condition where the sutures in the head close too early. In this case, the boy's head was football-shaped. There was a lot of team work, with doctors consulting each other. Peter Yorgin referred a woman with back pain to the orthopedic surgeon, Dr Arroz.

Dr Lori Warzecki and Pennee Robertson saw more of the adult patients. They were challenged by trying to help people who had diabetes, hypertension and hypercholesterolemia. Lori was able to use her knowledge of the Spanish language.

Liz Benezu and Anna Bedia, both nurse practitioners demonstrated a real willingness to adapt when they were unable to find a spot to set-up shop. Within a few minutes the tent-city workers had erected a small tent, labeled "Consultario 10" for them. They immediately went to work.

Pennee's son, Steven, really pitched in to provide water for the



Dr Lori and Nurse Pennee Ready for their next patient

team and helped to take down the tents at the end of the day. Cheryl Mitchell's daughter, Susanna, took photographs and jumped in to help cook hamburgers and hot dogs for the nearly 800 people who were at the Medical Brigada – she was amazingly flexible (and is ready to go head-to-head with any burger-flipper at McDonalds)! Terrie Stevens, who has worked with Harvest Christian Fellowship's construction teams in New Orleans, found herself sterilizing dental equipment. Terrie was last seen assisting a dentist by holding a flashlight.



Vacation Bible School

After noon, there was a vacation Bible school for the children. Songs and skits were performed and the kids learned about Jesus.

As the sun went down, the team headed off to Joe and Karen Centeno's favorite taco place in Tijuana. Karen was last seen ordering another carne asado taco con todo (with everything). Despite her best efforts, she was unable to break the Harvest Christian Fellowship record of 20 tacos eaten at one sitting!

As the team rolled nearer to the US border Penee bargained for two large blankets from the street vendors who sell to the drivers who are waiting to cross the border. The team was tired but in very good spirits.

Among our prayers, we asked that there would be enough healthcare professionals (there were plenty), that people would come to the Medical Brigada, that people would come to know Jesus and that the team would travel safely there and home. Over 600 people were seen in the clinic during the day.

Two hundred and fifty well children attended the Carnival of Health and VBS. There were a total of 890 people who came to the Medical Brigada. 245 people accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

The day went by so fast, but it is one we will remember because of what God accomplished!