

## Medical Mission: La Ceiba, Honduras

Marlene Nahavandi BSN RN CAPA

I had a wonderful opportunity to volunteer one week in La Ceiba, Honduras, in March, 2017, as part of the Hackett Hemwall Foundation ENT team. The team consisted of twenty extremely caring, passionate healthcare and non-healthcare volunteers all on the mission to help others in need. What an amazing experience! Teamwork was evident with every volunteer.



We began planning a year in advance by gathering unused OR supplies, reprocessing items, packing, labeling and finally shipping all the items in January. We spent several Saturdays packing items and a final Saturday packing the semi-trailer.

Our team of twenty all arrived in San Pedro, Honduras by 1230 PM to take a 3 hour bus ride to La Ceiba. As part of the ENT team, we began working together after our 0630 AM Sunday breakfast. By 0730 we divided into teams to

begin our work day.

Three surgeons, an anesthesiologist, preop nurse and a Honduran high school student interpreter all walked to the local clinic to begin screening patients for the upcoming week. This group evaluated 30-40 patients to determine which cases would be booked for surgery.



The other fifteen team members walked to the hospital to start moving boxes, unpacking, organizing and setting up the hearing clinic and two OR rooms for the week. First of all, our 150 plus boxes of supplies had to be moved to the hearing clinic and OR area. The surgical team began spent nearly seven hours unpacking, cleaning and organizing the OR rooms for Monday AM.



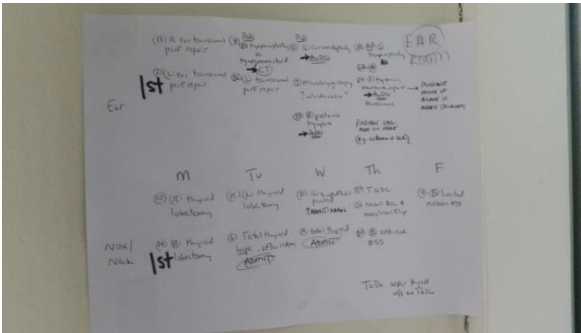
The audiology team set up a temporary clinic to provide ear exams, ear cleaning & hearing testing. We would average between 60-70 patients per day ranging in age from the school age child to the elderly.

Advertising for our free clinic was done prior to our arrival and during the week which brought many Honduran's to the temporary clinic.

I was part of the surgical team that performed nearly 30 surgeries during our week in La Ceiba. Each day



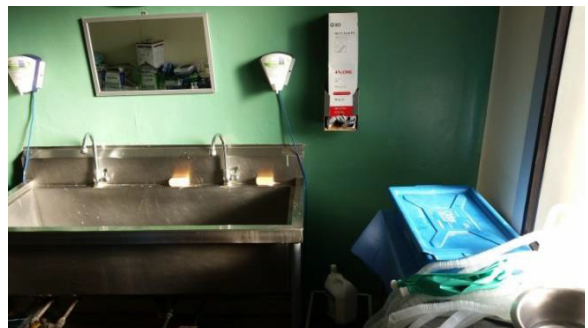
began with our “huddle” and a cheer for the day. A few of the cheers were “Honduras”, “Cipro” or “Go Team”



No EHR in La Ceiba! No status board, No Omni Cell! What will we do without the technology? It was like old times, paper and pen. Our OR “status board” was a piece of paper with our cases for each day posted outside the OR rooms. Our chart was paper. We made do with what items we had. As a team we came together and each of us expanded our role a bit more. Since we did not have any surgical techs I volunteered to assist in the OR as a circulator and scrub RN when not needed in the PACU. It was an

invaluable experience to gain a better understanding of the OR setting.

The picture to the right was our scrub sink and cidex bucket for cleaning instruments. As I was spent the week working in Honduras and using the supplies we had saved over the year, I was amazed at how much we toss out in our hospital every day. All of the equipment and supplies have been donated by hospitals or organizations.



After our last case on Friday afternoon, we spent the time organizing, repacking left over supplies, equipment and tallying what is needed for the following year. Then all the boxes were transported to the local physician's office for safekeeping.



We all came together as individuals from different backgrounds with one common purpose of helping others. In our work culture at home, teamwork has a constant emphasis, but I have never encountered such an excellent example of teamwork as my experience in

Honduras with a group of strangers. I would encourage everyone to participate in a medical trip if you have the opportunity.

