

# CAROLINA HONDURAS HEALTH FOUNDATION

## Newsletter – April 2, 2017



Dear Friends of CHHF,

Each year I look forward to the joining a mission team and volunteering at our clinics. Since 2006, I have served with 26 mission teams. Each one is different, yet the experience is always fulfilling. This year our team was in Honduras March 3 – 11. Our medical team saw 866 patients and filled 2,842 prescriptions. David Fairchild, the Dental Chair on the Board of Directors, joined my team and worked diligently for several days updating the dental clinic; he also saw 86 patients! We dispensed 132 pairs of reading glasses and untold pairs of sunglasses. Our team completed some repair/construction projects at the clinic and focused on community development programs. (Photo: Dentist Dave Fairchild in the Limón clinic)



Before my team of March, two teams served in February: Dr. Joel Edwards and Dr. Fran Kunda. Being the first team of the year, Dr. Edwards knew the need would be great. He split the team of 6 doctors into brigades, went to remote sites, and hosted two clinics each day. By doing so, he set a new record for the number of patients seen by one team in one week: 1,649. Toward the end of February, Dr. Kunda and her team saw 609 patients in four days. Some of their patients required follow-up by my team. Glad to do so!

**Patient Referral Program:** Begun in 2015, the patient referral program is an important success for CHHF. Set up to seek care for patients beyond that which can be provided by our general practice doctors serving for a week in Honduras, the number of referrals is growing. As an example of the increase, in February the Joel Edwards Team sent 21 medical referrals and in early March my team had 16. Six patients have recently had ophthalmic surgery. As of this newsletter we have 40 patients with ongoing or pending referrals.

The origin of this program is a simple story. In February 2012, a mother brought her 22 day old child to the clinic while my team was there. Diagnosed with a heart murmur, the child needed a specialist. When the team returned home, research found Friends of Barnabas, a foundation in the US which provides pediatric cardiac care in Honduras. Contact was made, the child was sent for specialized care and had open heart surgery. Today she is a healthy 5 year old.

Our medical volunteers have learned much about the Honduran health care system and why our Patient Referral Program is so vitally needed. Though there are public health clinics and public hospitals, often they are understaffed and most likely they have little or no medications. We have learned that because of the overload of patients, there is always a long wait. (We have also learned that Hondurans are patient people.) Someone needing medical treatment and walks in to the public hospital may or may not be seen. However, if a patient arrives with a referral paper from a Honduran doctor or from our clinic, they will be seen. When a patient is seen and finally given an appointment for surgery or treatment, that patient is usually asked to provide the necessary medical supplies such as sutures, gauze, and pain meds. We have learned that our clients in the rural area where we serve have never learned to advocate for themselves. Primarily, poverty affords few choices for medical care; secondly, patients do not know what questions to ask and what medical care to expect.



Recently, a family of four visited one of our clinics. They had actually been seen by a doctor at a local public hospital and both children had been diagnosed with urinary tract infections. However, the hospital sent them away saying they had no antibiotics. The family had no funds to purchase antibiotics at a local pharmacy; thus, they waited until a visiting team was at the CHHF clinic so that they could ask “the North Americans” for antibiotics.

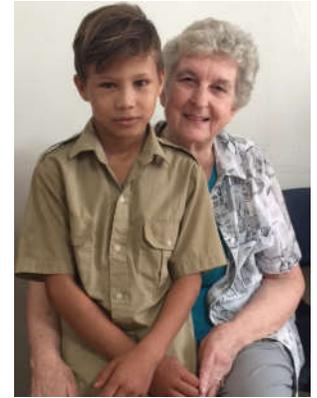
Another case recently involved a man referred for a hernia. He was sent to the local hospital in November with a referral paper from Clínica Carolina. After being evaluated by a surgeon, he was given the date of December 16 for surgery. Having the money to travel to the city hospital was a challenge for this patient and we had no teams in Honduras at that time, thus no way to send funds. He went again on December 16. Upon arrival he was told that many of the hospital staff were on vacation due to the Christmas holidays and his surgery would be rescheduled. Now, three months later, this patient is waiting for a phone call to say he has a new appointment. Thus, even with our efforts, the government health care has not provided for his needs. CHHF is still working to resolve this patient’s needs.



In 2016, we received a medical referral for a child with a massive umbilical hernia. Finding no medical care locally, the family came to us for help. Arrangements were made for the child to go to the Loma de Luz Hospital (an American charity hospital of the Cornerstone Foundation, located about four hours away) where a visiting US doctor operated successfully. The before and after photos tell the story.



When my team was in Honduras in early March, two children came to the clinic asking to see my wife Peggy who volunteers as the coordinator of this program. Several years ago both children had heart surgery through Friends of Barnabas, and both wanted her to see how healthy they are. They and their mothers expressed sincere gratitude.



The referral program has grown to include plastic surgery, ophthalmology, orthopedic surgery, pediatric cardiology and neurology, vein clinics, and general surgery. Appointments are made by coordinating with directors of specialized medical groups of the US or with Honduran doctors or hospitals directly. If financial assistance is needed for transportation, CHHF provides that. Often there are charges for specific medical tests or procedures; CHHF will help the patient cover those expenses. We then follow-up to ensure that appointments are kept by the patient. Those who do not know how to advocate for themselves and obtain medical care are provided with support and guidance.

**Community Development:** In February Gladis Aquiriano cooperated with teachers at the Francisco Morazán Public School, the Abel Gonzales Caballero School, and the Comunion H orphanage to hold classes on personal care and hygiene. Gladis and the teachers explained the importance of personal hygiene and the associated health benefits. As Gladis exclaimed afterwards, “Most of the students had no knowledge that things like washing of hands can prevent parasites and thus the need to take medicine for parasites.” Plans are ongoing for the continuation of education in other schools.



**Visit by Joint Task Force Bravo:** The US Military Joint Command at Comayagua visited the Limón district while my team was there in March. They are seeking a base from which to serve remote villages with a medical team this year. We offered the use of our clinic when our teams are not present. Their intention is to be able to reach remote areas via helicopter and to serve under-served communities. We encouraged their going to areas beyond Icoctas which our teams find difficult to visit due to the distances involved and the road conditions. While at our clinic, they were kind enough to take water samples and send us the results which showed that none of the clinic’s water showed any bacteria or fecal coliform present.

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Words cannot express our thanks to volunteers who use their vacation and pay their expenses to serve this need in Honduras. Yet, beyond this volunteer service, CHHF spends more than \$150,000 annually in order to provide medical care through our clinics. The health care we offer and programs such as the Medical Referral Program, the Community Development Program, and the Education Program are changing lives. Your donation today enables us to meet the expanding needs of our Medical Referral Program and other community programs. Please join with us in making a difference in the lives of those in Honduras who need a helping hand and keep us in your prayers.

Sincerely,

N. K. Hook, Jr.  
President