

PERU MAY 2017

CENTRO DE ESPECIALIDADES MEDICAS UPAO



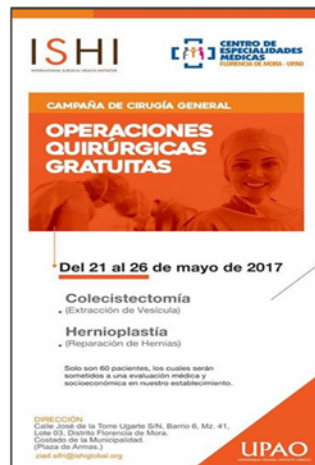
ISHI's 20th Mission Milestone

Trujillo, Peru

May 19-27, 2017

CENTRO DE ESPECIALIDADES
MEDICAS UPAO

Mission Leader –Dr. Ziad Sifri
20 volunteers



Twenty volunteers from 5 states came together in Trujillo, Peru May 19-27, 2017 to complete a milestone 20th mission for ISHI. Although the clinic was new to ISHI, the mission goal of providing free surgery to those in underserved areas remained the same. ISHI partnered with Centro De Especialidades who ran a successful local campaign advertising ISHI's May mission. Over 50 patients were triaged in one day and 47 surgeries were performed over 5 subsequent days. We were once again reminded about the mitigating factors that prevent many Peruvians from getting vital surgery including insurance restrictions and prohibitive costs. Patients often stated "God sent you to me" highlighting the plight

of hope and desperation patients often endured -fearing they would never have the means to afford surgery. Without intention, our mission to serve an unmet need seemed to intersect their prayers for divine intervention. The stories that follow hope to strengthen the resolve on the importance of global surgery and the impact it can have on changing lives forever while also providing a glimpse into the selfless, committed work of ISHI volunteers.



TEAMWORK EXEMPLIFIED

Mission days were long and exhausting, yet this team of 20 stayed positive, committed and supportive of one another throughout the mission. This group of volunteers exemplified the true meaning of teamwork.



We entered the clinic everyday during the daylight depicted above and left after sunset. The time spent in between inside the clinic was one that represented the epitome of teamwork on a mission. Although a few volunteers fell ill, they persevered and still came to work everyday. Their counterparts were there to support them and assist in the clinical areas that needed the help. This was just one example of the commitment to work demonstrated by this team of 8 returning ISHI volunteers and 12 first time volunteers. All learned the importance of conservation and improvisation with limited supplies as they were in Centro De Especialidades Medico UPAO. Pictured to the left was the rooftop of the clinic, where bed sheets and OR gowns were hung to dry everyday. Making the mission run successfully with a limited supply of items reinforced the importance of what was essential and what could be safely conserved or re-used, something in the US we typically do not focus on.

From day one of triage until the last few minutes of the mission, all the volunteers demonstrated a keen drive and commitment to work. They did this with a smile on their faces the entire week. The patients all sang the same song, one of gratitude and hope. Our volunteers and their positive presence gave the patients that gift. Patients sensed the selfless desire to help and commitment to ensure the best possible surgical care from pre-op to post-op to discharge. Patient perspective and satisfaction is directly linked to employee, in this case, volunteer, engagement. On that front, ISHI volunteers scored 100% on this mission!



“I sell candy to make money for me and my husband- god sent you to me – I would never be able to afford this surgery”- Maria RB



Pictured left to right:

Cosme Taipe RN

Vickey Patel PT, MS

Diana Smith OR Surgical
Technologist

Patient Maria RB

Kimberly Gray RN

Surgeon Not Pictured: Dr. Firas
Madbak

Three years. Image living with pain that limits your ability to work and provide for your family for 3 years with no means to an end in sight. For Maria RB, this was her harsh reality. She is the sole financial provider for herself and her partner, earning only a few Peruvian soles per day selling candy door to door. Her partner has cirrhosis unabling him to contribute financially in any way. She declined to speak further about his condition. They never married and have 4 grown children, none of who are able to assist in financially supporting them because of their own family obligations. This, as we learned during the interview, is very typical in the Peruvian culture. While her grown children could afford to help her, she feels there is shame in asking for help because they have their own children to support.

Her umbilical hernia had worsened over the last 3 years, to the point she needed to wear a “back brace” to help her withstand the pain of carrying her basket of candy. Her goal is to be able to sell enough candy everyday to buy food for her and her partner to eat the next day. There are days where she is not always successful.

Her daughter saw a commercial advertising ISHI’s campaign for free surgery and urged Maria to get evaluated. I recall meeting Maria, her daughter and granddaughter during triage. She was nervous, reluctant and needed encouragement from her daughter. She tells us about feeling scared to “be cut up” but admits this would have been her only chance to have the surgery. **She has been waiting over 2 years; unable to ever afford the surgery on the wages she makes selling a few pieces of candy per day.**

Members of the ISHI team joined her at the bedside as she approached discharge. She expressed how thankful she was and stated as she looked up to the sky, “Gracias a Dios por enviarme ISHI” translated “**I thank God for sending ISHI to me.**” With a smile on her face, she promises the nurses that she will do everything she is instructed to do post-operatively to heal. She reminds us that times will still be difficult for her and her partner, as they will have to find a way to afford food for the next month while she recovers from surgery. She hopes that family will provide her food until she is strong enough to go back to work...selling a few pieces of candy a day.

“Our lives were good before I was shot 4 years ago, now I can’t even work and support my wife”-Santos PP



Pictured clockwise from the left: Diana Smith- OR Surgical Technologist, Vickey Patel PT, MS, Patient’s wife-Mrs. PP, Kimberly Gray RN, Yadira Rodriguez RN, Dr. Michal Gajewki- Anesthesiologist, Dr. Carrie Valdez- Surgeon, Patient- Santos PP

Translator not required. His despair and emotional state while telling his history spoke a universal language, one that did not require a translator. Nevertheless, I was lucky to have Diana Smith, OR Surgical Technologist translate my questions and relay his story back to me. Truth is, I am grateful for her presence during this very heartfelt interview, one that left both of us emotionally connected without speaking a word to each other. If one ever needed proof that global surgery can change someone’s life and fate forever, all they have to do is follow along.

Those who covered the floor all sensed there was a deeper connection between Santos PP and his wife. They were often observed embracing each other and to the embarrassment of some, even kissing. Both looked much older than their stated age, no doubt from years of laborious work. His wife barely left his side for 6 days post-operatively. She would occasionally take a break for a few minutes to sleep out in the waiting room but she never left the clinic. Her devotion to her husband was apparent to anyone who was at the patient’s bedside. He tells us, with tears in his eyes, she is “mi seguridad” translated “my safety”.

Santos PP tells Diane and I his story, one that requires us to all stop halfway because of the emotional toll we all experience- him reliving it and us empathizing the agony of his last 4 years. Four years ago, Santos was shot 4 times by a group of kids as retaliation. He recalls all he did was ask them not to play on his yard the day before. Surgeons removed 4 bullets- two in his lower extremity, one in the abdomen and one near his spine. He spent months in the hospital recovering from multiple surgeries. He tearfully recalls the time where he was so weak he couldn’t walk and also learned he had to temporarily live with a colostomy bag.

As with most hospitals in Peru, the hospital would not discharge the patient until he paid his bill. The police eventually found the person responsible for shooting him. Santos worked out a “financial agreement” with his shooter’s family whereby they agreed to pay for his hospital bills. Eventually, the hospital agreed to the discharge.

Unfortunately, Santos PP’s medical and financial burdens did not end there. After his colostomy reversal, he developed ongoing problems with a hernia. He was re-admitted to the hospital with multiple complications. During that time, the person responsible for shooting him died in another altercation. The family of the shooter felt they no longer had a financial obligation to pay Santos PP’s medical bills. Once again, he was in a hospital unable to pay for his care and too ill to pursue a lawsuit against the family. He reports he eventually sought help from the Governor who agreed to pay his hospital bills.

Since the time of the shooting 4 years ago, Santos PP has been physically unable to work. He worked in construction while his wife was a homemaker. He recalls being a hard worker and taking pride in providing for his wife. When the money stopped coming in from the shooter’s family, he tells us his wife “saved” him. To financially support Santos and his medical bills, she “recycles” items she picks out of the trash. Santos becomes inconsolable as he tells us the devotion they have for one another. We take a break and contemplate whether it is appropriate to continue the interview.

Diana and I are unsure whether or not to continue the interview recalling the circumstances that caused us to stop just a few hours earlier. Santos smiles at us and asks us to sit with him. On cue, Mrs. PP is already pulling up chairs for us to sit and finish the interview. He likes to talk and perhaps telling his story in some way is cathartic for him. We sense that...and continue.

As his hernia worsened, he tells us he met with several doctors who told him there was nothing wrong. He questioned whether it was because they knew he couldn’t afford to pay for the treatment. He admits to seeing ads campaigning ISHI’s free surgeries. He also admits he ignored them for several weeks. One day, he willed himself into the clinic to sign up for the surgery. He can’t recall why he did that day but now attributes it to “God sending him the message, sending him ISHI”.

Although his post-operative course was longer than typical for a Ventral Hernia Repair with Mesh, he expresses immense gratitude for the surgeons and all the volunteers from ISHI. He tells us we are “God sent” and that everyone from triage to floorcare has provided him excellent care. He hopes this surgery will provide him a better quality of life by allowing him to eventually return to work. He cares mostly what it will provide his wife and that is respite from having to pick recyclables out of the trash to support the both of them financially. He affectionately holds her hand while he tells her he has hope that he will be able to work again thanks to ISHI.

Mr. PP’s story of a seemingly impossible reversal of fate plagued with financial burden and surgical need unfortunately echoes that of many who await surgeries in underserved areas such as Trujillo, Peru. ISHI contributes to providing the unmet need for global surgery worldwide by taking part in volunteer surgical missions throughout the year. We share these consented patient stories to educate others on the selfless work of ISHI volunteers as well as the impact that global surgery can have on improving the quality of life on an underserved population who would otherwise be unable to afford surgery.

Written by: Vickey Patel PT, MS

Translation provided by: Diana Smith OR Surgical Technologist