



# SOLIDARITY BRIDGE

*Healing & Empowering in Latin America*

## REPORT

### Multi-Specialty Mission Trip Coroico, Bolivia Sept 28th – Oct 9th, 2011



## HIGHLIGHTS

- We returned to the Hospital Universitario de Los Yungas, where we have worked alternating years since 2004
- Our diverse team of 20 US professionals provided care for 1,330 patients in dermatology, gynecology, neurology and cardiology clinics and performed 28 gynecology and general surgeries including gall bladder and hernia removal, hysterectomies, and procedures for urinary incontinence.
- We donated a total of \$700,800 of supplies, medications and surgical instrumentation that will be used in Coroico and our other mission locations in Bolivia.

## Our Mission Location

Our team arrived into Coroico, Bolivia without complication, though some noted altitude induced headaches and mild nausea throughout our three hour bus ride from La Paz to Coroico. Others commented on the breathtaking beauty of this Yungas region where the tropical highlands afforded fantastic views of lush, green, mountainous countryside. After our warm welcome at the Hospital Universitario de Los Yungas, we unpacked our medical supplies, got further oriented to our surgical and clinic work spaces and eventually retreated to our hotel for much needed rest.

As we began our mission work, we quickly came to realize that the same mountainous landscape we describe as 'scenic' presents enormous challenges to rural Bolivians who work and walk this terrain. Many of our patients walked anywhere from 1 hour to 2 days to seek our care. Our busiest days were weekends, the only days that affords them time away from their subsistence work and related wages.

We were taken by the immense gratitude expressed by patients, families and the medical professionals with whom we partnered throughout our 12 days. We also came away with deep gratitude for this unique solidarity experience of equal giving and receiving.



View from Hospital Universitario de Los Yungas



View from our clinic area where patients await the registration window.

## Patient Story

Nicanor Parez Barra is AfroBolivian, from Chijchipa, one of the small rural communities nestled in the tropical highlands of Murmurata—a challenging, up-down, four hour hike to Coroico over mountainous switchbacks. For three years Nicanor had suffered from an inguinal hernia that had diminished his ability to eke out a living as a farmer. When physically able, this 57 year old widower, father of three and grandfather of four, works in the fields six days a week (sometimes 7), from 8 am to 6 pm, for \$30 a week. It costs that much and more to cover food for a week, leaving nothing for clothing, education and healthcare. Nicanor, like many of the poor, lives in a one-room adobe house without plumbing. Also like many of the poor, Nicanor has an amazing sense of humor and an infectious laugh, especially whenever chaplain Fr Bob would mention the magic word “Paceña” (the local beer). As he was about to leave the hospital for his home, Nicanor said: “I thank all the doctors and nurses of Solidarity Bridge and all the donors who have made it possible for me to have my surgery—something I would never be able to afford. You have given me a new life. Gracias, gracias, gracias from my heart.”



Our chaplain, Fr. Bob Oldershaw,  
talks with Nicanor after his surgery

### MISSION TEAM:

Name		Role
Judy	Biggus	RN - Surgical
Mary Luz	Botero	Translator
Steve	Bujewski	MD - Gyne
Tony	Cirrincone	MD - Gyne
Ted	Conrad	MD- Derm
Carrie	Giordano	MD - Gyne
Katie	Gualandri	Resident Gyne
Jay	Herrmann	MD - Derm
Kathleen	Leggdas	Translator
Mary	Lerps	Helper
Dan	Maloney	Translator
Bob	Oldershaw	Chaplain
John	Oldershaw	MD - Neuro
Ann	Rhomberg	Trip Coordinator
Sue	Rhomberg	Photographer
Cid	Rhomberg	Helper
Barbara	Soricelli	Translator
Nancy	Streitmatter	MD- Cardiologist
Tim	Van Natta	MD - General Surgery
Enrique	Via Reque	MD - Anesthesiologist Medical Director