



SOLIDARITYBRIDGE
Healing & Empowering the Poor

REPORT
GENERAL SURGERY MISSION TRIP
January 27th – February 5th, 2011: Cochabamba

HIGHLIGHTS

- The goal of the trip was to take three expert surgeons and provide their experience and expertise to the Bolivian surgical community that serves the poor in Cochabamba, Bolivia.
- Our major goal was to help launch our General Surgery Year-Round Program.
- Our secondary goal was to improve the laparoscopic skills of our Bolivian partners and to provide educational offerings in the areas of laparoscopy, anesthesia and surgical nursing.
- We worked in four hospitals: Hospital General Viedma, the Instituto Gastroenterologico Boliviano Japonés, Clinica Arevalo and Clinica Lourdes.
- Dr. John Gregory did thoracic, bowel and laparoscopic surgeries, Dr. Gay Garrett did laparoscopic surgeries and Dr. Malcolm Bilimoria performed open cancer surgeries.
- We performed a total on 37 operations.
- Our team donated \$58,000 worth of general surgery instrumentation, supplies and medications, including 3 bronchoscopes and a laryngoscope. There was a special donation of new general surgery instruments worth \$35,877. Additionally, we donated 6 mechanical heart valves with a value of \$18,000, 52 pacemakers with a value of \$680,000 and 76 pacemaker leads with a value of \$76,000 for a grand total of \$774,000 for our Heart Surgery Program. In total we donated \$871,877.

MEDICAL MISSION

Our mission team traveled to Cochabamba, a beautiful valley of the Andes Mountains at an elevation of 8,430 ft. above sea level. This valley was the breadbasket of the Inca Empire and of the Spanish colony and has continued to supply the agricultural needs of Bolivia. The city itself was founded in 1542.

There are a number of noteworthy elements to this mission trip. Not only were the poor served, but we cemented the relationship with a major partner, the Instituto Gastroenterologico Boliviano Japonés, and in the process of launching our General Surgery Year-Round Program, we developed deepening relationships with local surgeons.

Over the years, we have realized that what we can do on any one mission trip, as important as that is, only touches a few of the poor in their surgical needs. Our mission model requires us to do all we can to make it possible for our Bolivian surgical colleagues to take up where we leave off. Consequently, on this mission, Dr. Gay Garrett provided laparoscopic training for our Bolivian partners, Dr. Jaime Vallejos and Johnny Camacho. She also taught the senior surgeons at the Instituto Gastroenterologico how to laparoscopically re-attach the colon after a colostomy. The patient profile of Laureano Paniagua is of one of these cases.

MISSION PICTURES and PATIENT PROFILE



Dr. Gay Garrett with Drs. Jaime Vallejos and Johnny Camacho, showing laparoscopic technique.



Dr. John Gregory, patient Marta and Dr. Malcolm Bilimoria discuss a very difficult surgical case.



*Missioner Janai Lowe sent us this journal to share with you about the beautiful story of **Laureano Paniagua**.*

January 31st, 2011

Laureano Paniagua is a farmer from the tiny town of Apillapama. Today he is sitting in a small consultation room on the first floor of the Gastro Institute in Cochabamba. He is accompanied by his daughter, daughter-in-law, and grandchild who sit quietly next to him. His daughter-in-law is dressed in traditional Bolivian attire, wearing a pollera skirt and colorful shawl, in contrast to his young daughter who is dressed in more modern attire. The creases in the women's faces deepen with worry as the surgery is explained to them. Only occasionally, do they turn to their father to translate what is being discussed into Quechua, their native language. Señor Paniagua sits

quietly only slightly nodding in acknowledgement, his face unchanged.

We leave his daughters and when asked for a photo, Señor Paniagua slowly removes his traditional Bolivian hat, pats down his hair in place, and faces the camera, all the while maintaining the same solemn look. After the picture is taken, he looks at the image and his face cracks into a smile which gives way to tears. He begins speaking quickly and earnestly in Quechua. Although I cannot understand what he is saying to me, I know it is important to him and he finally expresses his gratitude with a hug. I can feel him quietly sobbing, and then he moves to hug Judy, who has been quietly standing by. He is fully overcome with emotion, tears of gratitude streaming down his face. As he prepares to return to his family, he wipes the tears from his eyes and once again regains his composure for the sake of his daughters.

February 2nd, 2011

Today is surgery day for Laureano Paniagua. This will be his third operation. He has had a colostomy bag for over a year because he could not afford yet another operation to have it reversed. Fr. Bill, on his daily morning rounds, visits with Señor Paniagua. He gives him a small cross, which Señor Paniagua immediately kisses and his stoic face transforms into one full of hope and gratitude. Fr. Bill begins a benediction prayer and Señor Paniagua joins in rhythmically chanting throughout - “Tata Dios, Tata Dios” (Father God, Father God). Near the end, reaching his arms to the sky, Señor Paniagua calls out “Hallelujah!” Finally, it is time for the surgery.



Señor Paniagua’s daughter-in-law, sister and brother-in-law wait on the small row of benches outside of the operating room. They know the operation will take several hours, but they wait patiently and quietly, glancing up expectantly each time the window to the operating room is opened. When at last Dr Garrett comes out to them, they spring to their feet and rush towards her. Upon hearing the surgery went well, their faces relax a bit, though they will not relax fully until they are able to see their father. In Bolivia, many do not believe what they cannot see, something that is evident as specimens from gallbladders to appendices to limbs are routinely taken from the operating room and shown to family members as proof that surgery has occurred. Often the family will bring the removed body part home to bury.



February 4th, 2011

Señor Paniagua wants to go home. It worries him and his family that he has been in the hospital so long. He is still weak from the surgery but wants to leave sooner so they don’t have to pay for another night’s stay. He is greatly relieved when we tell him it will not cost him to stay one day more to heal before boarding the bus back to Apillapama. Finally, he is ready and journeys home. For anyone, a colostomy bag would be a trial. But living in rural Bolivia, it is many times worse as bathrooms and clean water are hard to come by. Señor Paniagua now looks forward to farming his land and living his life free from his colostomy bag.

MEDICAL MISSION TEAM			
Dr	John	Gregory	General Surgeon
Dr	Gay	Garrett	General Surgeon
Dr	Malcolm	Bilimoria	General Surgeon
Mr	Kirk	Kenfield	Physicians Assistant
Ms	Judy	Bigus	Surgical Nurse
Dr	Dan	Yousif	Medical Director and Anesthesiologist
Dr	Marco	Fernandez	Anesthesiologist
Fr	Bill	Tkachuck	Chaplain
Ms	Janai	Lowe	Helper
Dr	Juan L.	Hinojosa	Mission Coordinator