



REPORT GYNECOLOGIC SURGERY MISSION TRIP

March 5 – 12, 2016
Tiquipaya, Bolivia



Puente de Solidaridad staff Marcela Canedo and Patricia Vargas (from left) and board member Maria Eugenia Rojas (second from right) pose with missionaries Dr. Janet Tomezko and Dr. Ronald Miller. In the center of the photo is Genevieve, a patient from the 2014 gynecologic surgery mission trip who visited the team to tell them about the positive changes in her life thanks to treatment with the Novasure procedure.

INTRODUCTION

The 2016 Gynecologic Surgery Mission Trip was hosted by the Municipal Maternity and Children's Hospital of Tiquipaya located on the outskirts of Cochabamba. The team included two Chicago-area surgeons: Dr. Janet Tomezko, specialist in female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery (urogynecologist), and Dr. Ronald Miller, gynecologist. The trip was coordinated by Jodi Grahl, Gynecologic Surgery Program Director, and Mary McCann Sanchez, Solidarity Bridge Senior Director of Programs, both of whom also served as interpreters for the doctors. The staff of Solidarity Bridge's local counterpart, Puente de Solidaridad, supported the mission trip from the earliest planning through the follow-up phases. In addition, Bolivian medical professionals filled various support positions for the mission.

GOALS

The 2016 Gynecologic Surgery Mission goals are outlined as follows:

- To provide **highly-specialized surgeries** to restore and improve quality of life for women who lack access to treatment.
- To **advance training** most specifically in mid-urethral bladder sling surgery to treat stress incontinence, diverse pelvic reconstruction procedures, and the NovaSure endometrial ablation procedure to treat heavy bleeding.
- To assess and support partner readiness to **consolidate Gynecologic Surgery Program activities**.
- To continue to **assess local needs** and opportunities for the evolution and growth of the program.

SUMMARY of PATIENTS SERVED

- Over **30 women were evaluated** for conditions including urinary incontinence, heavy bleeding, and vaginal prolapse, among others.
- Surgical treatment was approved and provided for **13 patients**.
- Surgery patients ranged in age from 42 to 68, with **an average age of 53**.
- **Nine women underwent mid-urethral sling surgery** to treat urinary stress incontinence.
- **Two endometrial ablation procedures** were performed to treat cases of heavy bleeding.
- Many of the women required multiple pelvic reconstruction procedures, with one patient undergoing six distinct procedures within the same surgery.
- Surgery was not the best treatment option for the other patients, who were prescribed or referred for appropriate medical care.

MISSION ASSESSMENT and PROGRAM IMPACT

Meetings were held among the Solidarity Bridge missionaries and staff, Puente de Solidaridad, and Tiquipaya Hospital Director Dr. José Luis Choque, to discuss the status and challenges of the Gynecologic Surgery Program. In an important development for the program, following the mission trip, an agreement was formalized between Puente de Solidaridad and Tiquipaya Hospital to provide gynecologic surgeries on a permanent basis at the hospital.



Puente de Solidaridad social worker Marizol Mamani (center) tirelessly managed patient documentation and communications for the mission visit. She is shown here with Patricia Vargas coordinating plans with a patient.

PATIENT STORY

After giving birth to 12 children, including a few complicated deliveries, Alma's reproductive system was left with multiple injuries. She did not want to worry her family, and her bad experiences had left her afraid of hospitals and doctors, so she kept her suffering to herself for decades. But when she saw an announcement on television about an upcoming mission offering pelvic reconstruction surgeries for low-income patients, Alma hatched a plan to make a secret detour from a shopping trip to buy supplies for her sidewalk food stand to meet with Dr. José Luis Choque at the Tiquipaya Hospital. Dr. Choque's gentle manner put Alma at ease, and she decided she was ready for surgery.

Alma needed a total of six distinct pelvic reconstruction procedures, which are precisely the specialty of missioner Dr. Janet Tomezsko, who was assisted by fellow missioner Dr. Ron Miller and Dr. Choque. By the next day, Alma was flirting with the hospital staff, proclaiming she was a new woman! Nevertheless, her recovery required patience as well as careful monitoring and follow-up provided by Dr. Choque and tracked by Puente de Solidaridad social workers well after departure of the mission team.



Ron and Janet with Alma* and one of her daughters, a day after surgery.

*Patient name has been changed.

MISSION TEAM and SUPPORT STAFFS

Dr. Ronald Miller, Gynecologist

Dr. Janet Tomezsko, Urogynecologist

Jodi Grahl, Coordinator & Interpreter

Mary McCann Sanchez, Assistant Coordinator & Interpreter

In addition to the Tiquipaya staff and interns, professional services were provided by:

Dr. Alejandra Guarayo, Anesthesiologist

Dr. Jhony Cardona, Anesthesiologist

Nohelia Moreno, Surgical technician

Puente de Solidaridad managed all local planning and logistics:

Patricia Vargas, Executive Director

María Inés Uriona, Medical Programs Coordinator

José Choque, Medical Supplies Coordinator

Marcela Canedo, Public Relations

Marizol Mamani, Social Worker

Alfonso Flores, Logistics

Pablo Galindo, Research and Data Manager

Verónica Castellón, Administrative Assistant

Maria Eugenia Rojas, PS Board Member, Chaplain

*Thank you to our mission team,
Dr. José Luis Choque and
everyone at Tiquipaya Hospital,
the Puente de Solidaridad staff
and board, and all our
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trip possible!*