



# SOLIDARITY BRIDGE

Healing & Empowering the Poor

## REPORT MULTI-SPECIALTY MISSION TRIP Tiquipaya and Aiquile, Bolivia

September 26<sup>th</sup> – October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012



*Dr. Fady Fakhoury treats a patient's tooth, while her daughter takes a nap*

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Our mission was hosted by the Maternal and Children's Municipal Hospital of Tiquipaya, located on the outskirts of Cochabamba and serving an urban and rural population of over 35,000 people. Small missioner teams also traveled to the Chapisirca clinic within the hospital's rural network.
- One surgical team traveled to Aiquile, Bolivia to continue our collaboration with Doctors Without Borders to provide colon surgeries for chronic Chagas disease patients.
- A total of 49 surgeries (32 gynecological and 17 general surgeries) were performed.
- Our pediatrician, neurologist, dermatologist, cardiologist, and gynecologists evaluated/treated 820 patients.
- The dental team saw over 200 patients.
- Medical education was provided through both professional partnering spanning our range of specialties.
- We delivered medications, anesthetics, surgical supplies and equipment valued at \$1,178,000 dollars.
- Solidarity Bridge successfully launched its new Gynecology Program, based at Tiquipaya Hospital.

### **OUR TEAM**

The 33-member mission team included 17 medical professions: a general surgeon, three gynecologists, a pediatrician, dermatologist, cardiologist, neurologist, family practitioner, two anesthesiologists, a dentist and dental hygienist, and four nurses. A chaplain and several interpreters, photographers, helpers and staff

rounded out the team, which was also supported by several local volunteers. Finally, we could not have successfully completed our mission without the assistance every step of the way by our experienced and dedicated Bolivian staff.

## **OUR WORK**

### **Outpatient Clinics:**

Over 800 patients were seen in our clinics, as follows: 112 in cardiology, 450 in dermatology, 40 in gynecology, 121 in neurology, and 93 in pediatrics. Our dentist treated 120 patients (and pulled roughly 140 teeth, including 40 surgical wisdom teeth extractions), and our dental hygienist provided cleanings for approximately 80 patients in addition to teaching good hygiene practices to many more.

The majority of these patients were identified and scheduled through a community outreach campaign put into place prior to our arrival, and were seen in the clinics located at the Tiquipaya Hospital. Other patients were seen at the Chapisirca rural clinic located two hours from Tiquipaya and part of the municipality's rural clinic network. Missioners also visited three area orphanages and a home for the disabled to evaluate and treat residents for whom access to specialists is all but unheard of.



*Dr. Daniel Lum evaluated 93 pediatric patients at the Tiquipaya Hospital clinic.*

### **Surgeries:**

In preparation for our visit, the Tiquipaya Hospital, with assistance from the Municipality of Tiquipaya, built a second operating room, completed hours before our arrival and put in to full use throughout our stay. Procedures performed both there and in Aiquile are outlined below.

- 7 general surgeries were performed in Tiquipaya, including a colon surgery, hernia repairs, a gall bladder, a ruptured appendix, and a complex thyroidectomy.
- 32 gynecological surgeries were performed including abdominal and vaginal hysterectomies, a myoectomy, ovarian cystectomies, and bladder support procedures for urinary incontinence.
- 36 dermatological surgeries included 6 larger cases and 30 smaller procedures such as mole biopsies and the removal of benign lesions.

- In Aiquile, our surgical team returned to the Carmen Lopez Hospital where we first worked in January 2012 to treat chronic Chagas Disease patients identified through a Doctors Without Borders program currently based there. Ten surgeries performed included megacolons, colostomy reversal procedures, a fistula, and two gall bladder surgeries.

*Dr. Ottolin's cardiology talks were in high demand.*



## Medical Education:

Each of our professionals worked alongside one or several local colleagues during outpatient clinics and in the operating room for intense one-on-one exchange. In addition, groups of medical residents and local staff often filled the clinic rooms and O.R. and followed rounds to observe techniques and be exposed to new procedures.

To provide a formal setting for presentations on specific topics for medical staff and residents and the broader municipal health network, the Hospital organized a **Bolivian-American International Symposium**. In **cardiology**, Dr. Mark Ottolin addressed an eager group of doctors and students on three separate occasions on the diagnosis and management of various heart conditions. Over two dozen residents and doctors gathered for Dr. Jay Herrmann's **dermatology** presentation on dermatitis and acne. Dr. Fady Fakhoury provided two talks, one on general **dental** topics for a student group and the second on dental implants. Nancy Rhomberg gave a presentation on dental hygiene and bacterial plaque. Nancy Churchill and Martha Schmid observed local **nursing** practices and needs especially in the operating arena, and used their observations to fine-tune a slide show and presentation on sterilization, patient management, and other topics pertinent to the surgical setting. Dr. Daniel Lum detected a simple but significant opportunity in Tiquipaya Hospital's **pediatrics** department. Despite the fact that periodic weight and height data of Bolivian children are recorded, the information was rarely plotted on growth charts. A presentation by Dr. Lum on the insights to be garnered from this easily-applied practice resulted in abundant promises by staff and residents to take better advantage of this technique.

## Launch of Solidarity Bridge Gynecology Program:

After a long process of discernment, this year Solidarity Bridge launched a year-round program to provide gynecological surgeries to low-income Bolivian women. The Tiquipaya Maternal and Children's Hospital was chosen to launch this program in conjunction with the 2012 MSMT. An expanded team of three U.S. gynecologists joined the mission to share surgical and clinic roles, with a vision toward making this the first of numerous visits to train and equip this Hospital, including its three fulltime OB-GYNs and numerous residents.



The US and Bolivian counterparts worked side-by-side at all steps of patient care, from finalizing selection of surgical candidates, through each surgery, and in the monitoring of follow-up care. Special focus was directed during this mission to teach the TOT bladdersling procedure to treat urinary incontinence. This is a prime example of a simple procedure that can immensely improve the quality of life of countless Bolivian women, but is out of reach for all but the wealthy sectors.

*Drs. Bob LaPata and Carrie Giordano have assumed leadership in Solidarity Bridge's new Gynecology program.*

### **Donated Materials:**

Approximately 3,000 pounds of medical materials and supplies were hand-delivered to Bolivia through this mission. These included a new stock of pacemakers and leads for our pacemaker program. Electrosurgical cauterization machines, a selection of meshes and patches, and other high-value items critical to our year-round surgical programs and very difficult to obtain in Bolivia were also delivered. Specifically for our new gynecology program, a complete hysteroscopy set was donated to Tiquipaya Hospital, and multiple gynecology supplies were stocked at our warehouse for use in the coming year. These and other materials, ranging from pediatric clinic supplies to anesthesia meds to surgical staplers, had been gathered over several months through Solidarity Bridge donors from throughout the United States. The total value of these in-kind donations is estimated at \$1,178,000.



*3,000 pounds of instruments and supplies arrived safely in Bolivia.*



*Kurt Florian and Brian Sakowski unload supplies at their final destination in Aiquile. MSF helped with the final leg of ground transportation there.*

## **PATIENT STORY**



*Maria Magdalena Lopez Vargas, the day before surgery for massive thyroid enlargement*

Maria Magdalena is a 43-year-old mother of five daughters and grandmother to two infants currently under her care. Maria grew up one of several children from a very poor family, and while still a teenager she married an equally destitute young man. They built a mud-brick home on a tiny plot belonging to her husband's family in rural Sacaba, east of Cochabamba. They had no land on which to plant even subsistence crops, and Maria's husband has a hard time holding down a job, so for the past 25 years she has kept the family afloat doing housework for neighbors. When a few years ago she began to suffer the discomforts of an enlarged thyroid, the family did not have the resources to visit a specialist, so she did her best to ignore the growing bulge in her neck. But as time went on, it began to affect her ability to eat and breathe. When the family heard that a surgical mission would be arriving in Tiquipaya, they had great hope Maria might receive the surgery she now desperately needed. Dr. Tim Van Natta found that the growth had extended far down into the patient's chest. In Dr. Tim's words: "Without an operation, one would have anticipated progressive airway compromise and eventual suffocation over a matter of months."

Maria Magdalena received her surgery on September 29<sup>th</sup> and remained in the hospital six days to recover under the eye of the mission team. Although it was a very complex surgery, her condition was benign, and she has now returned to her home and family. A local endocrinologist will monitor her condition, ensuring that Maria Magdalena receives the necessary thyroid replacement therapy.



*Dr. Tim Van Natta and O.R. nurse Brian Sakowski work with a local surgeon at Tiquipaya Hospital*

## **MISSION TEAM MEMBERS**

Each of the following missionaries contributed his or her part to the success of this mission.

Ann Rhomberg	Trip Coordinator
Jodi Grahl	Trip Coordinator
Kurt Florian	Trip Coordinator, Aiquile
Fr. Bob Oldershaw	Chaplain
Dr. Dan Yousif	Trip Medical Director, Anesthesiologist
Dr. Carrie Giordano	Gynecologist
Dr. Jay Herrmann	Dermatologist
Dr. Bob LaPata	Gynecologist
Dr. Dan Lum	Pediatrician
Dr. Ron Miller	Gynecologist
Dr. John Oldershaw	Neurosurgeon
Dr. Mark Ottolin	Cardiologist
Dr. Michael Perconti	Anesthesiologist
Dr. Spencer Rickwa	Internist
Dr. Tim Van Natta	General Surgeon
Dr. Fady Fakhoury	Dentist
Nancy Rhomberg	Dental Hygienist
Nancy Churchill	Nurse
Brian Sakowski	Surgical Nurse
Martha Schmid	Nurse
Kristen Skoch	Nurse

Kate Barrett	Interpreter
Mary Luz Botero	Interpreter
Paola Fakhoury	Interpreter
Anna La Tour	Interpreter, Dermatology Assistant
Erin Rickwa	Interpreter
Meredith Van Natta	Interpreter
Dale Granchalek	Photographer
Sue Rhomberg	Photographer
Marie Durkin	Helper
Mary Lerps	Helper
Dr. Mary Morrisey	Helper
Saja Yousif	Helper