

SOLIDARITY BRIDGE

REPORT **ONCOLOGICAL SURGERY MISSION TRIP** March 9-18, 2018 Santa Cruz, Bolivia



After meeting each patient and reviewing their cases, the mission team and Bolivian partners sit down to finalize the mission week schedule.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ten U.S. missionaries traveled to Santa Cruz, Bolivia, for Solidarity Bridge's first Oncological Surgery Mission Trip (OSMT), hosted by the country's first and foremost public cancer hospital, the *Instituto Oncológico del Oriente Boliviano* – the Oncological Institute of Eastern Bolivia. The U.S. medical team included two surgeons, two anesthesiologists, and one physician assistant, supported by two interpreters, a supplies coordinator, team chaplain and trip leader. The goals of this mission trip were to develop relationships and ongoing partnerships to expand access to advanced care at Bolivia's most renowned location for cancer treatment of low-income patients.

II. ACTIVITIES and ACHIEVEMENTS

The mission team met their Bolivian counterparts at the Oncological Institute on the morning of Sunday, March 11, when the joint U.S.-Bolivian team evaluated patients pre-selected by the Bolivian partners for surgery. Over the following five days, **14 surgeries** were performed. Cases operated included colon, gastric, rectal, gall bladder, and liver cancers. Other surgeries treated significant benign tumors, including a life-threatening schwannoma (neck tumor). These surgeries had been previously unavailable to the patients for financial reasons, lack of supplies or equipment, and/or the need for specific expertise or experience.

Mutual mentoring and training occurred throughout the process of final patient selection, discussion of treatment options, surgery, and follow-up care. Missioners and local partners performed each aspect of patient care as a team, with all participants learning from each other.

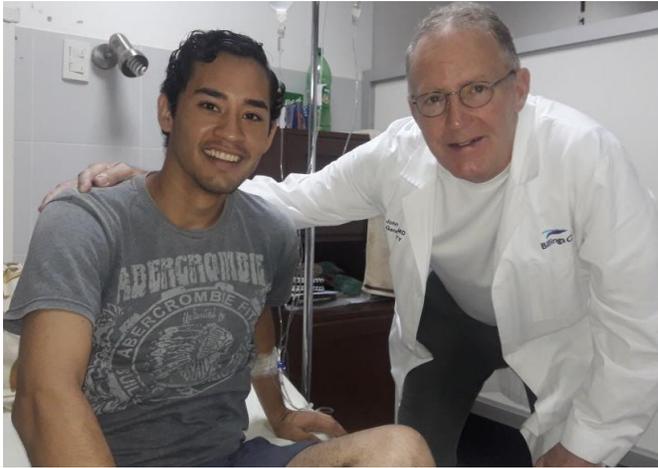
Another significant contribution of this mission team was the estimated \$266,000 worth of **in-kind donations** they delivered, including specialized supplies for use during the trip and to support Solidarity Bridge's year-round surgical programs throughout the country. On April 18, one month after conclusion of the mission, the Oncological Institute received a truckload of medical, surgical, and anesthesia supplies selected by its staff from the Puente de Solidaridad warehouse. As part of the broader medical equipping objective, these post-mission donations help to ensure that partner hospitals can continue to implement the techniques learned and otherwise sustain their work.

Mission anesthesiologist Dr. Marco Fernández demonstrates intra-operative use of portable ultrasound technology to target a delicate surgery procedure.



III. PATIENTS and FAMILIES

The patients treated on this mission trip were overwhelmingly young; average patient age was just 50, and four out of the 14 patients were in their 20s. Most have children, while others had put off having families amid their health struggles. As a result of mission trip surgeries, many of these patients now have second chances at a normal life. In a few cases, however, the team was only able to confirm inoperable conditions. For many families willing to make extreme sacrifices to find treatment, and for their doctors equally eager to exhaust all options, the opportunity to have a difficult prognosis confirmed by an international team brings some peace of mind. It can help them know that they have done the best they can.



Upon departure of the mission team, the 14 surgery patients remained under the care of the Bolivian doctors at the Oncological Institute. They and their families also continue to receive support from the local Puente de Solidaridad office, in particular the PdS Social Worker in Santa Cruz, Carmen Salses.

Victor, 26, had colon function restored after seven years coping with an ileostomy due to colon cancer.

IV. MISSION TEAM MEMBERS

Solidarity Bridge is grateful for each of the following individuals and the many unnamed others – the host hospital staff, multiple donors, families and colleagues who covered for us back home – who together made this mission possible.

Solidarity Bridge leadership:
 Jodi Grahl, Trip Leader
 Megan Kennedy-Farrell, Chaplain

Missioners:

Dr. Malcolm Bilimoria, Oncological Surgeon
 Dr. Marco Fernández, Anesthesiologist
 Dr. John Gregory, General Surgeon
 Vivian Joffre, Interpreter
 Dr. Kathryn Podgorny, Anesthesiologist
 Natalie Rodriguez, Interpreter
 Megan Sheridan, Medical Supplies Coordinator
 Katie Weiner, Physician Assistant

Oncological Institute staff:

We extend a special **Thank You** to the leadership and staff of the Oncological Institute of Eastern Bolivia. Some of the professionals we were privileged to partner with include: Medical Director Dr. Martha Alicia Arrien; Hospital Manager Dr. Gabriela Antelo; Chief of Surgery Dr. Nelson Bejar, and staff and resident surgeons Dr. Jorge Amelunge, Dr. Gonzalo Avilés, Dr. José Copa, Dr. Flores, Dr. Janco, Dr. Cecilia Noemi Padilla, Dr. Marco Sadud, Dr. Carlos Sadud, Dr. Soliz, and others, plus the incredible nursing and OR staff.



The OSMT team!

Local leadership, staff and support:

Puente de Solidaridad develops relationships with partner hospitals and medical personnel, manages local planning, and is key to the success of all we do.

OSMT 2018 PdS Support Team:

Patricia Vargas, Executive Director
 Marcela Canedo, Public Relations
 Patricia Paz, Coordinator of PdS Santa Cruz office
 Carmen Salses, Santa Cruz Social Worker
 Desirée Méndez, Santa Cruz Supplies Coordinator
 Ariel Montaña, Communications