



Multi-Specialty Mission Trip
September 23 – October 2, 2016
Punata, Bolivia



I. INTRODUCTION

Since 1999, Solidarity Bridge's large multi-specialty mission team has assembled annually to provide both clinical and surgical care to underserved Bolivians while also equipping and teaching at local host hospitals. This year, our team worked at a secondary hospital in the town of Punata, approximately 30 miles south of Cochabamba. Our nearby partner office, Puente de Solidaridad, provided much planning and support prior to our arrival and its staff accompanied us throughout our 10-day mission. They continue to liaise with the Punata hospital leadership as future mission activities are considered at this location.



II. MISSION GOALS

1. Provide clinical and surgical care to low-income patients in partnership with the Bolivian medical community
2. Share knowledge and skills with the Bolivian medical community using a mentorship approach
3. Provide medical equipment and supplies to local partners who serve low-income patients
4. Offer all participants an experience of personal transformation

III. MEETING OUR GOALS

A. Provide specialty medical services to low income patients in partnership with the Bolivian medical community

Throughout our mission week, patients received care at reduced costs. An opportunity to receive a needed surgery or assessment of a life threatening illness motivated many underserved patients to travel long distances, by foot or by bus. Across five specialties (Cardiology, Gynecology, Pediatrics, Family Practice, Physical Therapy) our missionaries worked alongside Bolivian medical professionals to treat 402 low-income patients in clinics at the hospital and throughout the Punata community at large. Numerous patients were also seen in their homes.



Additionally, 4 gynecologic surgeries (hysterectomy, removal of uterine polyp, and pelvic organ prolapse repairs) and 17 general surgeries (ileostomy reversal, hernia repairs, gall bladder removal, and others) were performed. Focused on sharing laparoscopic instrumentation and methodologies with their Bolivian counterparts, our missionaries were also grateful for the opportunity to help people like gynecology patient, Isabel, who is quoted and pictured below with Dr. Peter Tinsman.



"I had an operation and now I am doing so much better. May God bless you, and please come back, because it is not just Punata, but all of Bolivia that needs you. "

B. Provide medical equipment and supplies to local partners who serve low-income patients

Forty-one large suitcases containing medical supplies, medications and instruments were hand-delivered by our mission team. Items such as laparoscopic instruments, anesthesia medications, and surgical mesh were used throughout the week while other donated materials remain in Bolivia to subsidize our year-round programs in various locations. The total in-kind value was estimated at \$686,007



C. Share technical information and skills with the Bolivian medical community using both classroom and hands-on mentoring approaches

While providing direct service in clinical and surgical settings, we approach our work with a spirit of mutuality. Solidarity Bridge missionaries worked with Bolivian counterparts, providing informal training and observational learning opportunities in the operating rooms and clinics.



Additionally, five missionaries offered one-hour lectures in classroom settings for medical students, interns and physicians on these topics:

- Cardiac pathologies - Mark Ottolin, MD
- Megacolon pathologies - Magued Khouzam, MD
- Surgical management of urinary incontinence - Bob LaPata, MD
- Neonatal resuscitation - Mary Hall, MD and Monica Joseph Griffin, MD
- Post-op medication and pain management - Jackie Mortillaro, RN



D. Offer all participants an experience of solidarity and personal transformation

U.S. missionaries who travel to Bolivia work in a spirit of solidarity. That is, we are grounded in the vision that we are part of one human family and, in that oneness, our individual skills and resources come to bear and are shared. Prior to departure, Solidarity Bridge prepares participants for their mission experience through spiritual formation as well as logistical and cultural orientation. Upon arrival, the team gathers for an opening ritual and immersion into cultural aspects with our partners at Puente de Solidaridad. And regularly throughout the week, the team continues to reflect on the significance of their mission experiences.



Fr. Bob Oldershaw found a way to offer spiritual care each day to patients and families, while missionaries quickly came to experience the deep joy of working in solidarity.



IV. CONCLUSION and NEXT STEPS

The Multi-Specialty Mission Team contributed to the wellbeing of low-income Bolivian patients while sharing technical skills and equipping Bolivian medical professionals. We cordially thank our partners at Puente de Solidaridad and the Punata Hospital staff for their hard work before, during and after our visit to make this mission possible. Together they will assess future collaborations. Meanwhile, they will continue working together on mobile laparoscopic campaigns which augment our year-round General Surgery efforts by providing needed services, equipment and expertise to more rural areas that show readiness for laparoscopic surgery intervention.

V. OUR TEAM

Our 23-member U.S. mission team included one general surgeon, three gynecologists, a cardiologist, a family practice physician, anesthesiologist, physical therapist and two nurses. Our chaplain, interpreters, helpers, and staff rounded out the team. None of our mission activities would have been possible without the on-site preparations and fulltime accompaniment provided by Puente de Solidaridad, our partner organization in Cochabamba.

(See team photo on page 1.)

Gustavo Arreguin, Interpreter
Susana Castro-Pollard, Interpreter
Tony Cirrincione, MD, Gynecologist
Alvaro Encinas, MD, Family Practice
Margaret Flanagan, Supply Management
Jen Gentile, RN, Surgical Nurse
Rachel Gunderson, Communications
Mary Hall, MD, Pediatrician
Monica Joseph, MD, Pediatrician
Magued Khouzam, MD, General Surgeon
Bob LaPata, MD, Gynecologist

Cecilia, Miranda, Interpreter
Jackie Mortillaro, RN, Clinic Nurse
Fr. Bob Oldershaw, Chaplain
Mark Ottolin, MD, Cardiologist
Michael Perconti, MD, Anesthesiologist
Julie Phipps, Interpreter
Sofi Porter-Castro, Trip Assistant/Interpreter
Ann Rhomberg, Trip Leader
Kim Stover, Physical Therapist
Peter Tinsman, MD, Gynecologist
Enrique Via Reque, Medical Director/Anesthesiologist
Deb Winarski, Photographer

Benezet Intern

Solidarity Bridge recently established the honorary position of Benezet Intern, named after St. Benezet, the patron saint of bridge builders. As our first international Benezet Intern, Gustavo Arreguin of Evanston, Illinois, spent eight weeks in Bolivia in the fall of this year. Gustavo collaborated with Puente de Solidaridad partners on several projects, including the advancement of our missionary formation materials. During his stay, Gustavo also joined several Solidarity Bridge mission teams including this multi-specialty team as interpreter.



Puente de Solidaridad Leadership

Patricia Vargas, Executive Director
Marcela Canedo, Public Relations
Maria Ines Uriona, Medical Programs Coordinator
José Choque, Equipment and Supplies Coordinator
Marizol Mamani, Social Worker

