Focusing on the Ixcán

EYE CARE AND EYE HEALTH EDUCATION FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE IXCÁN REGION OF GUATEMALA

Volume 12 Issue 3 Fall 2016

AN OPTOMETRY STUDENT’S AMIGOS TRIP OBSERVATIONS
By: Tina Zhu, Optometry class of 2018

After 4 days of clinic, traveling over 6,000 miles, providing nearly 1100 eye exams, and dispensing over 550 pairs of glasses... saying this trip to Guatemala “was a great experience” is an understatement.

Before departing to Playa Grande, Ixcán, we spent an entire day exploring the culture in Guatemala City. We had the privilege to travel to a local vision clinic called Visualiza. Their mission to provide health services to the public, beginning with vision care such as comprehensive eye exams and cataract surgery, has now expanded to everything from dentistry to hematology. Listening to Charlie, a director at Visualiza, talk about the importance of health service truly opened my eyes to what it means to be a health care provider in the world today. Afterwards, we visited the Central Plaza, where we learned about the recent Guatemalan history including a violent 36 year civil war. The people we were to be examining were heavily impacted by this war.

At 7 AM in the morning of our first day of clinic in Playa Grande Ixcán, we already had a line of about 50 people waiting to see us. I remember Dr. Pike saying that this was a sign that we were going to have a busy day. And he was right. On that day alone, we were able to see 260 patients. Most of the patients received glasses, artificial tears, or a referral for cataract surgery.

“Most of the patients received glasses, artificial tears, or a referral for cataract surgery.”

“These patients will always hold a special place in my memory.”

“I will forever be grateful for this opportunity and I am humbly waiting for the day I go back.”

- Tina Zhu

Tina with a group of primary school students from San Lorenzo
Observations, continued from page 1

Cataract surgery. One patient I remember from that day and will probably remember for as long as I practice was a woman who came in with acute angle closure glaucoma. We learned about acute angle closure glaucoma multiple times in the classroom at Pacific University prior to this trip; the classic red, painful eye with nausea/vomiting and increased vision loss. I would have never imagined treating my first acute angle closure patient as a 3rd year optometry student and definitely not in a foreign country, like Guatemala. As our supplies were limited, I regret we couldn’t have done anything more other than alleviate her symptoms of nausea and vomiting. On the day we left Playa Grande, we took her with us to one of Visualiza’s eye clinics. I still wonder about her now as I am back in the states, and hope we got her to a surgery center in time to save her vision. (Note: this woman received eye surgery the next week to relieve the excess pressure in her eye. She is now comfortable and has retained some vision in the eye.)

For the following 3 days of clinic, I experienced so many ‘firsts’ as an upcoming clinician. I saw my first congenitally blind infant, my first herpes keratitis, my first fungal keratitis, my first traumatic cataract, my first optic nerve pallor, and so many more. These patients will always hold a special place in my memory.

In conclusion, this trip to Guatemala with Enfoque Ixcán and our Amigos Eye Care group at Pacific College of Optometry was not only a great experience, but also will have a huge impact on my life as a practitioner. This trip has opened up my eyes and heart to a world outside of my own. I will forever be grateful for this opportunity and I am humbly waiting for the day I go back.

NEW EQUIPMENT IMPROVES PATIENT CARE

Thanks to the Rotary International grant Enfoque Ixcán was awarded earlier this year, we have two new pieces of diagnostic equipment for our eye health promoters to use.

One is a smart phone powered auto-refractor called EyeNetra. With this device Felipe and Arnulfo will have the ability to test people’s need for glasses in a quick and objective manner. Our patients will be able to have more accurate prescription lenses.

The other testing instrument is an Icare Tonometer. The Icare measures the pressure inside the eye and is used in testing for glaucoma and for monitoring a patient’s intraocular pressures after cataract surgeries. Since the eye surgery clinic is 5 hours from Ixcán, this measurement will improve our surgery follow-up care.

Felipe learns to use new equipment
APPROACHING A MILESTONE

Here are some up to date statistics.

We have:

- Examined 15,346 people
- Dispensed 7,169 pairs of glasses
- Funded 456 eye surgeries (325 cataract surgeries)

In 2017 we hope to pass the 500 mark for eye surgeries funded.

We’ve been able to accomplish this with the support of our donors.

Please help us reach 500!

AUGUST 2016 TRIP HIGHLIGHTS by Scott Pike

The 14th annual Enfoque Ixcán / Amigos Eye Care mission trip to Ixcán, Guatemala is completed. Five students from Pacific University, Tina Zhu, Linda Wong, Austin Anderson, Huy Do and Eric Bues made up the core of our team. Our doctors included Hoang Cao, Sarah Martin, Clyde Slavin, Robert Slavin and myself. Two other hardworking volunteers, Nicole Leonard and Lisette Romig completed the team. I was impressed with the dedication, hard work and enjoyment everyone shared.

In 4 days of clinics our team of 12 examined 1,090 people and dispensed 556 pairs of free glasses. In addition, 77 people were referred for further professional evaluation. Most of these people will need cataract or other eye surgeries.

I also met with the mayor of Ixcán to confirm our acceptance of his offer of a piece of land for our clinic location. Because the new land is currently undeveloped we will need to have it cleared and arrange for the availability of water, sewer, and electricity. A new road is being built on the east side of the land which will allow more convenient access for people. When the road is completed we will be ready to build. This development continues to move forward, albeit at a slow pace!
LOCATION OF NEW CLINIC —Here is a Google Earth view of Playa Grande and the land the Municipal government has given us on which to build our new clinic. Playa Grande is planned to grow towards our location. A new road will be built and there will be some jungle clearing required. We hope to start the clinic construction after the new road is completed.

Contact Us

Enfoque Ixcan
13670 NW Pettygrove
Portland, OR 97229
503.277.9711
Enfoquelxcan@aol.com

Visit us on the web at www.enfoqueixcan.org

Enfoque Ixcan
Board of Directors
Dr. Scott Pike, president
Dwight Fleck, treasurer
Maureen McCrae, secretary
Dr. Brian Arvidson, member
Ali Durbin, member
Amanda Terhes, member
Dr. Cristin Mattione, member