



Guatemala, 2019



The Healing Hands Foundation is a non-profit organization committed to providing medical, dental, and surgical care to people in need around the world.

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Executive Summary

In November of 2019, The Healing Hands Foundation (THHF) returned to Patzún, Guatemala for their annual mission trip. Patzún is a rural community located about 50 miles west of Guatemala City and is primarily inhabited by those indigenous to Central America. The mission team made up of medical and non- medical volunteers was able to perform 82 surgeries for 69 patients in the course of four and a half days. These patients travelled anywhere from a few minutes up to eight hours to be treated at the Sanatorio Corpus Christi. The patient demographics differed, but the purpose for being there did not - these patients arrived to be treated in hopes of improving their overall health and quality of life.



Guatemala Health Profile

Located in Central America, Guatemala is ranked to have the lowest life expectancy rate of the Latin American Countries, and has some of the highest rates when it comes to maternal and infant mortality. “In 2013, maternal mortality was 113.4 deaths per 100,000 live births. Of these deaths, 68.4% were indigenous women and 42% were illiterate women. The leading causes of death were hemorrhage, hypertension, infection, and abortion.”² When it comes infant mortality it was reported that from 2010 to 2015, mortality in children under 5 was 35 deaths a year per 1,000 live births, with an astonishing 80% occurring in the first year of the infants life.² Guatemala is also among some of the highest rates of diabetes and heart disease in the world.³

Contributing to the poor health status is largely the socioeconomic factors that the population faces. The country has a large population of indigenous families living in rural areas, which makes getting access to health care a bit challenging due to language barriers, cost and lack of specialists to list a few.³ Guatemala is said to have around 22 indigenous languages making

communication between a health care professional quite difficult, especially when also combined with a lack of education, which causes many to not seek treatment.³ The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) states that as of 2015 about 24.3% of the population was living in extreme poverty, with that percent even higher among the indigenous making paying for health services more difficult.² According to the World Health Organization (WHO) some of the leading causes of death among infants under one year of age are related to “disorders originating in the perinatal period and congenital malformations,” which would require specialists to treat, but only about 20% of specialists treat in rural Guatemala.^{2,3} Because of these factors the health of many in Guatemala continues to decline, making the quality of life for many extremely poor.



The Foundation



The Healing Hands Foundation (THHF) was established in 2007 and has then dedicated their time and resources “to sustainably provide high quality surgical procedures, medical treatment, dental care, and educational support in under resourced areas worldwide. [They] establish strong in-country partnerships to involve local communities in our activities: treating patients, improving health care infrastructure, and providing needed medical training to surgeons, doctors, and community health care workers. Going beyond providing direct patient care, [they] aim to create a long-term impact, empowering impoverished countries to improve the health and quality of life of their own people.”¹

The team of medical staff perform various surgeries that provide much more than “cosmetic benefits, but also correct functional defects: cleft lip and palate repairs so that children can eat and speak normally, release of restrictive burn scars to allow patients to move their fingers or arms, and repair of congenital malformations of the ear so that children can hear.”¹ The foundation is 100 percent volunteer based making their mission even more impactful!

Volunteers

This foundation is 100 percent volunteer driven and in November 2019, 28 volunteers arrived in Patzún, Guatemala for their 11th year. The volunteers traveled from different US states including: Arizona, Baltimore, New York and Florida.

Volunteer Role	Number of Volunteers	Volunteer Role	Number of Volunteers
Surgeons	3	Nurse / Nurse Practitioner	4
OBGYN	1	Medical Student	1
OR Surgical Tech	1	Translator	2
OR Nurse/ OR RN/ Scrub Tech	6	Videographer	1
Anesthesiologist	8	Other Volunteer	6



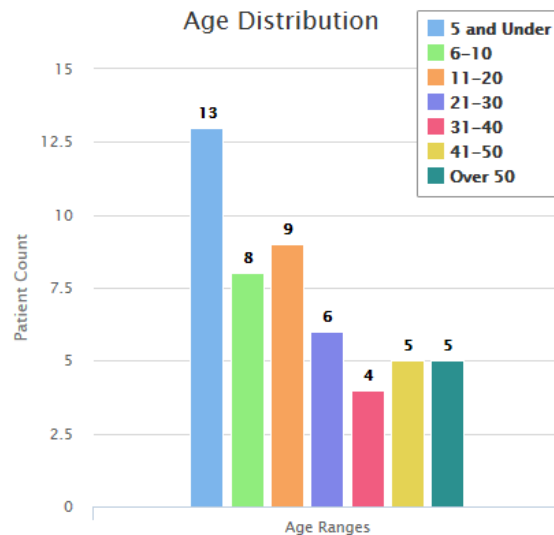
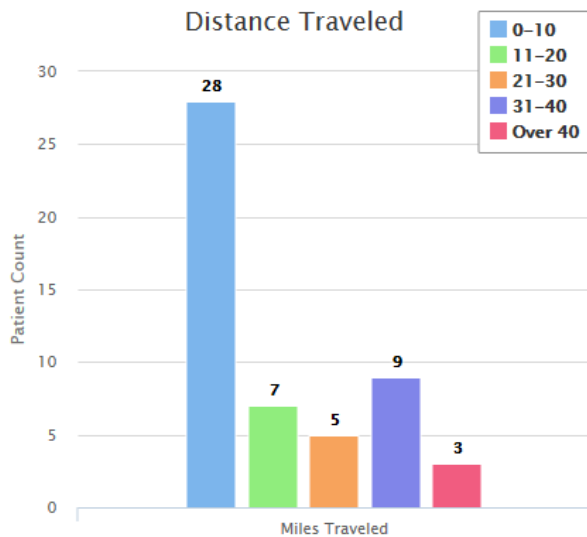
Resources

In addition to providing medical services to the people of Guatemala, the healing hands foundation donated a number of supplies to the clinic and the orphanage of Sanatorio Corpus Christi. These supplies included medication for the patients of the clinic, as well as clothing and toys for both the children of the orphanage and those being treated during the mission trip.



Patient Demographics

While about half of the patients lived locally, either in the city of Patzún or the surrounding area, many others traveled from all over Guatemala, coming from 29 different communities in total. Many traveled by car, with trip times averaging two and a half hours, while others took a bus, with some trips taking up to 8 hours.





A total 69 patients were treated with many of them requiring multiple operations. Another 20 patients were originally slated to be seen but were forced to cancel due to issues with travel. Of the patients treated roughly one third were children, with the majority of kids being under the age of six. Patient counts were fairly evenly distributed amongst the remaining age ranges, with the oldest patient being 69 years old. Patients were also evenly split along gender lines, with only slightly more female than male patients.

Medical Activities

The healing hands surgical team performed 82 surgeries over the course of 5 days, running as many as four operating rooms simultaneously. Operations ranged from minor cosmetic procedures, such as scar reductions or the removal of small cysts, to more complex procedures, such as full ear reconstruction and several Hysterectomies.

Type of Surgery	Number
Congenital Abnormality	8
Hernia Repair/Removal	17
Mass/Growth Removal	30
OBGYN	4
Orchiectomy/Orchiectomy	5
Reconstruction/Scar Reduction / Skin Graft	12

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