

Opal House-Rotary Orthopedics & Podiatric Surgery, 2024



Dates: March 18-22, 2024. 43 surgeries performed in 5 OR days

The Opal House-Rotary Medical Mission team has conducted its tenth surgical mission trip to the Hospital Obras Sociales de Monsignor Gregorio Schaffer (HOSMOGRESCH) in San Lucas Toliman, Guatemala. The mission or “jornada” was again sponsored by the Fidalgo Island Rotary Club of Anacortes, Washington (www.fidalgorotary.org) and co-hosted by Opal House (www.opalhouseguatemala.com) with additional logistics support from Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare (<https://www.gillettechildrens.org>), the Podiatry Institute (www.podiatryinstitute.com) and private donors.

Faculty from the Podiatry Institute on the team included: Drs. Louis Jimenez, Stephen Miller, Carl Kihm, and Will Boegel.

The mission’s primary focus is surgical reconstructive of pediatric limb deformities, primarily of the lower extremity. Surgeries were performed by podiatric surgeons and pediatric orthopedic surgeons. Our veteran team of volunteers also included anesthesiologists, nurse anesthetists, a team of skilled nurses, a pediatrician, an orthopedic physician assistant, surgical techs, a biomechanical engineer, administrative organizers and support staff. One of the highlights of the trip is always to reevaluate patients from prior years. The structural and functional improvement of our past clubfoot reconstruction patients is again astonishing. As podiatrists, mission work is very rewarding. In twisting around a poor child’s clubfoot, we help give them a chance at a normal life. Seeing patients through this life-changing transformation is special. Five of our patients had surgery on their second foot after having surgery on their first foot last year.

This surgical mission evolved out of the efforts of volunteers Will and Diane Boegel who were called back to Guatemala after a medical mission. Their life mission has become service of

the poor (especially the women and children), the indigent, the sick and the forgotten. Amongst the natural beauty of the land and Lake Atitlan, the local people face many hardships, particularly the Maya community, emerging from a 36 year civil war. Dr. Boegel selflessly serves and devotes his life toward the treatment of the pediatric population in this area.

The HOSMOGRESCH serves more than 34,000 people locally, mostly who are Mayan, without discrimination of any sort. Patients were procured via the local clinics and networks of Dr. Tun and Dr. Boegel. As our former patients have spread the word and informed others in their communities about our mission, more patients seem to find us each year. well with minimal or no pain.

Pathology encountered included torsional extremity disorders, nonunions, malunions, hip dislocations, osteomyelitis, hardware for removal, tumors, cerebral palsy, clubfoot (virgin, rigid, neglected, residual and partially corrected), isolated equinus, and amniotic bands (Streeters). In 5 OR days, the team performed over 100 surgical procedures on 43 patients. Ponsetti casting was again performed and taught to local therapists. Several patient had an Achilles tenotomy in conjunction with casting.

Our team maximized the visit by working 12-13 hours each day so we could have the largest impact as safely as possible. Unfortunately, we had to turn away 5 surgical candidates due to time constraints. The need for surgical treatment remains great.

The HOSMOGRESCH hospital is in good working order and currently undergoing hospital expansion with the goal of expanding Pre-Op and PACU wards and OR capacity. We have been providing surgeon input to help with the expansion plans. We remain devoted to the patients in Guatemala and the efforts of Drs. Raphael Tun and William Boegel.

Stephen Miller, DPM
Carl Kihm, DPM
Team Co-Leaders



Far Left: A young girl pre and post clubfoot reconstruction.

Above. Team leaders - Dr. Carl Kihm and Dr. Stephen Miller continue to organize the annual March mission to Guatemala.



Playing football with clubfoot children following their surgical evaluation.



Dr. Carl Kihm with an 8 year old girl who presents with clubfoot. Bottom right photo shows the immediate post-operative repositioning following surgical reconstruction.



Left: A young boy before and after clubfoot reconstruction

Bottom Left: Dr. Wynn Perlick waits out an hour power outage. In Guatemala, we face various limitations and unique challenges where we have to do more with less.

Bottom Right: A young boy with contracted ankle presents toe-walking. He was corrected with Achilles lengthening and posterior capsular release.





Top Left: Dr. Louis Jimenez prepares a young girl for surgery.

Top Right: Dr. Stephen Miller lectures on Ponseti casting and when surgery is necessary.

Bottom left: A patient's severe, neglected clubfoot before and after talectomy and reconstruction.

Dr. William Boegel has a crucial role in patient recruitment and also patient follow-up in his clinics. Dr. Boegel is a podiatrist who lives in Guatemala and is devoted to less fortunate folks who live there.



Dr. Carl Kihm and Dr. Louis Jimenez effecting change for a young boy who benefits from bilateral foot surgery. His right clubfoot and left digital deformity is shown above. Thumbs-up approval and a smile is a great initial outcome.

