

HUMANITY FIRST, GUATEMALA:

GIFT OF SIGHT 2017

Overview

Since 2012, volunteers from the Loyola University Department of Ophthalmology have partnered with the Humanity First Gift of Sight team on week-long eye camps to provide medical and surgical eye care to rural Guatemalans. During the recent mission trip from March 25th, 2017 through March 31st, 2017, we provided medical and surgical ophthalmic care and performed a total of 81 surgeries – 48 cataract and 33 pterygium cases. Additionally, three of our participants served as guest lecturers for the Guatemalan Ophthalmologic Society Meeting in Guatemala City, Guatemala. The volunteer team also had the opportunity to tour the future Nasir Hospital by Humanity First in Antigua, Guatemala. The short-term eye camp addresses the immediate need for eye care for those in the country who would otherwise lack access to vision-related services, while the future hospital hopes to provide a sustainable system of providing healthcare to locals by locally-trained medical professionals.

Patient Care

Eyeglasses

While a large number of the native Guatemalans we saw in our clinics required surgical intervention to improve their vision, many benefited from obtaining eyeglasses for the first time. Dr. Madiha Amjed, an optometrist from the Washington, D.C. area, served as the trip's optometrist and performed vision screenings, refractions, and dispensing of prescription eyeglasses.



Dr. Madiha Amjed counseling a patient

Cataract Surgery

Cataracts are the leading cause of reversible vision loss in the developing world. Many of the rural Guatemalans we saw in our clinics had significant vision impairments from their cataracts and would meet the United States criteria for legal blindness. Our cataract surgery team included cataract surgeons, surgical technicians, ophthalmic technicians, anesthesiologists and general volunteer staff. Cataract surgeons included Drs. Ahsan Khan, Tayyeba Ali, Noureen Khan, Charles Bouchard, Samra Hashmi, Paul Park and Maria Jones. Juan Núñez served as our lead surgical technician. Erica Swanberg served as our lead ophthalmic technician. Our anesthesia team was comprised of Dr. Nasir Tanauli and local anesthesiologists as well as volunteers Sameena Khan and Shalin Govender. Olivia Bouchard, Clara Shelton, Zara Hashmi, Rahman Tanauli and Azeem Rahman served as our medical volunteer staff and were in charge of providing post-operative instructions, translation services, and documentation with clinical photography. A total of 48 cataract surgeries were performed during the 5 days of surgery. Dr. Rudy Gutierrez, a local Guatemalan ophthalmologist and his team of residents also assisted in these cases. Dr. Rudy Gutierrez also monitors the postoperative courses following the week of the surgical camp.



Dr. Noureen Khan, Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology at Loyola, performing a combined cataract and glaucoma surgery. This was aided by a first-time donation of iStents to the Gift of Sight mission.

Gift of Sight team with postoperative cataract patients at the Humanity First Antigua Office.



Pterygium Surgery

Pterygiums are common eye conditions, especially among populations nearer to the equator. Many can induce vision impairment and eye irritation and pain. While the vision and symptomatic improvements following pterygium surgery are often not as immediately noticeable as those following cataract surgery, a number of individuals who had pterygium surgeries performed by our camps in previous years returned to have operations in their fellow eye and were thankful for the care provided in the past and present.

Dr. Charles Bouchard teaching pterygium surgery to a visiting ophthalmology resident from Mexico (left). Dr. Paul Park examining a patient prior to pterygium surgery (right).



Continuing Medical Education

On Thursday, March 30th, 2017, the Guatemalan Ophthalmological Society (La Asociación Guatemalteca de Oftalmología) held its meeting in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Three of our mission trip participants – Drs. Charles Bouchard, Noureen Khan, and Tayyeba Ali – were invited as guest speakers for this event. Topics ranged from advances in micro invasive glaucoma surgeries (MIGS) and innovations in corneal transplantation techniques. All talks were well-received and informative, especially given the fact that many of these techniques are not currently being performed by the local Guatemalan ophthalmologists who were in attendance.



Guatemalan Ophthalmologic Society meeting .
(Left) Drs. Noureen Khan, Tayyeba Ali, and Charles Bouchard shown together at the GOS meeting. (Right)



Future Plans

While the eye camps address the immediate need for eye care for rural Guatemalans, the new Nasir Hospital by Humanity First seeks to address the need for sustainable long-term eye and general medical care in this region. The land for this hospital was first secured in 2015 and development of the land first started in 2016. Construction is expected to be complete in the Fall of 2017 and the hospital plans to be operational by Spring 2018. David González, the executive director of Humanity First Guatemala, and Dr. Ahsan Khan, current board member of the hospital, led our team on a tour of the facility currently under construction

The hospital will provide 24/7 emergency care as well as inpatient, outpatient, and surgical services. The staff will be comprised of both local healthcare workers and international volunteers.



Loyola team in front of the hospital.

Entire team photo in front of the hospital.



Additional Photos



Erica Swanberg, a certified ophthalmic technician from Loyola, checking visual acuity.



The Loyola team evaluating a patient with long standing eye pain, redness, and discharge who had not seen an eye doctor for 8 months due to cost restraints. She had travelled 2 hours and waited 4 hours for the opportunity to be evaluated.



Dr. Tanauli, an anesthesiologist from Houston, and medical student Sameena Khan placing IVs and delivering anesthesia preoperatively.



Volunteer Olivia Bouchard aiding in preoperative assessments of patients.

Additional Photos



Patients await entry into the OR in the preoperative waiting area.



Dr. Noureen Khan and Juan Núñez, a surgical technician in California, performed the first and last cataract surgery of the mission trip.



Drs. Tayyeba Ali and Noureen Khan examining a patient one day after cataract surgery.



Dense white cataracts are a common threat to vision and independence among rural Guatemalans.