

Report
MANCHESTER COLLEGE MEDICAL PRACTICUM, JANUARY 2004

During the 22nd annual Medical Practicum in Central America, and the 12th to Nicaragua, the medical team delivered health services to 1,506 patients (1,364 medical consultations, 142 dental consultations) in Santa Maria and the surrounding areas. We are extremely grateful to those who contributed to the success of this program.

Medicines and supplies were provided at reduced costs by Interchurch Medical Assistance, Inc., Blessings International, MAP International, Roche Laboratories, World Dental Relief, Fisher Scientific, and Bayer Corp. Sanofi donated Aralen (anti-malarial tablets) for the medical team.. The total cost of medicines and supplies for this year's trip was \$7,100. All of the medicines and supplies were hand carried as 18 large checked bags on our flight and all arrived and passed through customs with us. All medicines not used during our two weeks of clinics remain at the Santa Maria Clinic in Nicaragua.

Our team consisted of five physicians, four medical students, two midwives, two nurses, one dentist, one dental assistant, a pharmacist, an EMT, five Manchester College students, one faculty, seven translators and four family members. The group also set up a satellite clinic in Las Brisas, a small village near Santa Maria.

Some 5000 people inhabit Santa Maria which is high up in the mountains near Honduras. Employment is scarce and many families are hungry if not starved. The state run clinic is staffed by two doctors, several nurses, a pharmacist, and a dentist one day a week. The pharmacy was virtually empty when we arrived and was modestly supplied when we left. The well-baby program in Santa Maria seemed very successful and we noticed that most babies had had immunizations and decent nutrition.

General health in the community was fair, but the community had few resources to treat even simple ailments. We saw many cases of skin diseases, body pain mostly from arthritis, and stomach ailments, malnutrition, and high blood pressure. Our midwives attended one birth and observed another. Numerous people were referred to a regional hospital in Ocotal and one of our medical staff is returning to Santa Maria this summer to follow up on the burn victim and a child with a heart condition.

Students played on the local soccer team and scored a goal in a tournament. The Manchester team joined in the celebration and mingled in the community more than in years past, supporting local shops, playing with hordes of children, and worshipping in the local parish. We were not successful, however, in the greased pole contest!

We hiked to Honduras, visited nearby villages, sang songs with the church staff, and hosted a Nicaraguan folk singer one evening. Of all the good things a medical team can do, sometimes the most important is building relationships. We hope to see these new brothers and sisters again and to work together for health and understanding.

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