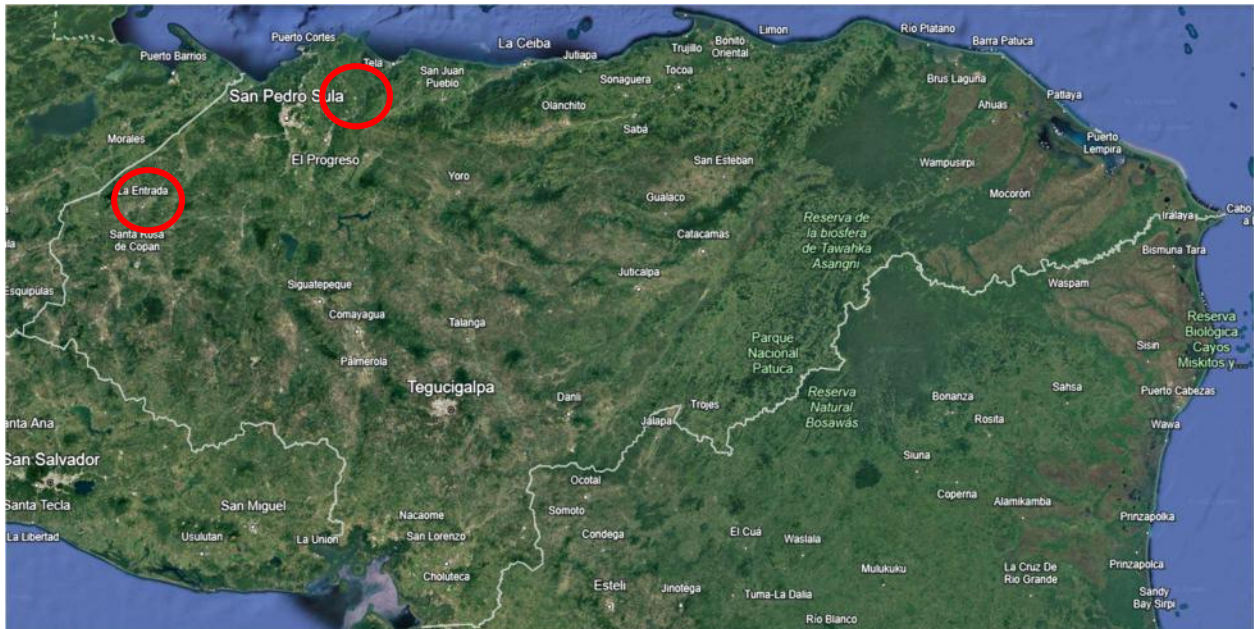


Wake Forest - Ending Cataracts in Honduras Outreach (ECHO) Program Brigade #15 Newsletter January 2025

Hola Wake Forest family! The Wake Forest ECHO Program recently sent another successful surgical brigade to Honduras from January 12-19, 2025. The 15th Wake ECHO brigade provided cataract, cornea and strabismus surgeries in San Pedro Sula and La Entrada, cities about 2-3 hours apart in the northwest part of the country where there remains a large unmet need for eye care.



The Brigade 15 team included Wake Forest faculty Matt Giegengack, Levi Kauffman, Mike Evans, Dean Bonsall and Jagger Koerner; Residents Jared Peterson and Landon Thompson; Cornea fellow Charles Pophal; medical student Isaiah Hayes, and program alumni Brian Foster and Ryan Chenevey.



The brigade team flew into San Pedro Sula on January 12th and split into two teams, with the cornea and pediatric teams staying in San Pedro Sula to work with local ophthalmologists at the Lions Club Hospital Fraternidad.



The Hospital Fraternidad continues to grow rapidly, and local ophthalmologists now perform over 5000 cataract surgeries per year. The hospital has also expanded to provide retina, pediatric, glaucoma and cornea surgeries. However, the lack of a national eye bank has resulted in many patients who are blind from cornea disease with no ability to receive a vision-restoring cornea transplant. Dr. Giegengack and Dr. Pophal worked with local cornea specialist Dra. Katerin Pineda to perform 15 cornea transplants over 2 days of surgery. We are thankful to the tissue donors themselves, and to CorneaGen and the Georgia Eye Bank who generously supplied us with the cornea tissue on this trip.



This represented the 3rd Brigade that provided pediatric ophthalmology and strabismus surgeries. Dr. Bonsall and Dr. Koerner completed a record twenty-four eye muscle procedures with Dr. Juarez, the local pediatric ophthalmologist who hosts us in San Pedro Sula. The team operated on adult strabismus for the first time as well during this brigade. Offering corrective eye alignment surgery to these adults is more than just a cosmetic procedure, it is life altering.



We would like to highlight one of our patients, Jarem who used a large right face turn to dampen his congenital involuntary eye movements. We examined him and offered corrective eye surgery to his family to help his anomalous head position. His parents were very hesitant at first since earlier this year Jarem's infant brother passed away from a respiratory illness. After much prayer and consultation with their church elders they consented for the eye muscle surgery. Our team performed a complex Kestenbaum procedure on Jarem's eye muscles in both of his eyes eliminating his large right face turn and forever changing his life!



We are indebted to Dr. Guillermo Pineda for providing general anesthesia services for our patients that made this brigade a huge success! We also explored expanding our efforts to the city of La Entrada, Honduras to provide pediatric ophthalmology services on future brigades. We look forward to expanding the much-needed pediatric ophthalmology services in Honduras.

While the cornea and pediatric teams stayed in San Pedro Sula, the cataract team headed on to the city of La Entrada, which is in the western part of the country and named for its location as the gateway to the mountainous western highlands of Honduras and the Copan Mayan ruins. This was our second brigade performing cataract surgeries at this site and the first time we had spent a full week there.



Over the course of a week the team performed 76 cataract surgeries, one secondary IOL implantation, several YAG laser procedures and numerous clinical consultations. Surgeries were a mix of Manual Small Incision Cataract Surgery and phacoemulsification using the Oertli portable phaco machine. Since the clinic has now added a second Oertli Phaco machine, we were able to have two rooms operating simultaneously and increased our cataract volume to 15-20 patients per day.



The Manos Amigos nurses continue to provide excellent surgical assistance by running the autoclaves, circulating and scrubbing for our surgeries. Local optometrist Karen Murillo helped direct patients, obtain biometry and perform blocks. On Thursday, the pediatric and cornea teams joined the cataract team in La Entrada and the extra help was much appreciated!

One of the chief aims of the WakeECHO program is to introduce our trainees to international mission work and foster a passion for service that will continue into their careers. Jared Peterson and Landon Thompson performed many cataract surgeries each under the supervision of Wake Forest faculty, and were able to perform MSICS surgeries with expert teaching by Brian Foster. Charles Pophal, our cornea fellow, performed several of the cornea transplants and cataract surgeries and we look forward to having him join our next brigade in May as well. Our medical student Isaiah Miller kept busy documenting our patient outcomes and learning to perform retrobulbar blocks.



On Saturday afternoon after seeing post op patients, we had a chance to visit the Copan Mayan Ruins which are only an hour from the Manos Amigos Clinic.



We are very grateful for the continued support from our many sponsors:

Alcon continues to generously supply us with intraocular lenses, disposable surgical instruments, surgical drapes, viscoelastic, and many other items. Without their support these trips would not be possible.

CorneaGen and **the Georgia Eye Bank** donated tissue for 15 cornea transplants, as well as the equipment needed to transplant them. We also thank the anonymous cornea tissue donors themselves, who gave a priceless gift to enable the sight of others.

ImprimisRx donated compounded drops so that patients could get their post operative medications free of charge.

We received generous support from **individual donors** who have given to support this brigade and the WakeECHO effort, including **Dr. Brian Foster** who has given so much of his time, resources and passion to the WakeECHO program.

The Wake Forest School of Medicine Department of Ophthalmology and its Chairman Dr. Craig Greven, who continues to support our mission and allows our faculty, residents and fellows to take a week away from clinical duties. Julia Garber works hard behind the scenes on trip planning and logistics.

The Lions Club of San Pedro Sula and the **Eye Hospital Fraternidad** and **CEO Oscar Santos** who shares our passion for fighting blindness in Honduras.

The **Manos Amigos Clinic**, including medical director **Dra. Delmy Sanchez** who helped with planning and logistics to make our trip successful; optometrist **Karen Murillo** who takes great care of the patients in La Entrada; **Carlos** who transported our team safely each day; Dr. Pacheco who helped with the pre- and post-operative care of our patients; and the nurses who were fast learners and a lot of fun to work with.

We are also grateful to **Mike Tysowsky** and **Serving at the Crossroads** for reaching out to us and for their amazing work helping the lives of the poor in Honduras through the Manos Amigos clinic. Additionally we appreciate the help of **Dr. Randy Rottman** and **Vision Health International**, who provided valuable advice and shared supplies for this trip. We look forward to working together in our common goal of providing eye care to the underserved in Honduras.

With gratitude from the WakeECHO brigade 15 leaders,

Matt Giegengack, Levi Kauffman and Mike Evans