

**The Eighth WakeECHO Ophthalmology Surgical Brigade to Honduras June 16-23, 2019
(Don't miss the photos at the end!)**

The eighth WakeECHO Brigade to Honduras returned home on June 23, after a productive week of cataract and cornea surgery at the Lions Club Hospital Fraternidad in San Pedro Sula. The Wake Forest School of Medicine Department of Ophthalmology, in collaboration with ECHO (a non-profit that facilitates cataract surgery for indigent patients in Honduras), partners with the San Pedro Sula Lions Club to perform week-long surgery brigades twice a year. Our goals are to give sight to our Honduran patients, teach and learn from our Honduran medical colleagues, and to inspire our students, residents, and fellows to give their skills throughout their careers to help the millions in the world that are blind from cataract and other eye disease.

On this trip, veteran brigade surgeons Drs. Giegengack, Martin, Foster, and Dickinson were joined by VA faculty surgeon Dr. Altemare. The senior residents were Drs. Levi Kauffman and Kathy Tsamis. Faye Martin RN returned as the OR charge nurse and our medical student was Bethany Bouldin MS1. Our efforts were supported by skilled Honduran surgical techs, medical graduates, and interpreters.

Compared to previous brigades, we spent a lot more time in the clinic, evaluating many patients referred for consideration of cataract or corneal surgery. On this brigade, we evaluated all of our patients preoperatively, which allowed us to choose the best surgery and anticipate potential problems (and explain to some why surgery was not a good option). We saw 30-40 patients each morning in the clinic (pre and post ops), and performed a total of 180 surgeries during the week, including nine corneal transplant surgeries (5 DSEKS and 4 PKs).

Each trip has its own unique challenges. For example: a bus load of patients from a neighboring city wasn't able to make it as planned, due to protests/strikes blocking the road. A recently-repaired second phaco machine crashed after one day, so we became acquainted with an AMO Signature phaco machine. We had a few power outages, but the phaco machines and microscopes have battery backup, so we could continue with the help of cell-phone flashlights (the ORs have a backup generator, but it takes a while to switch over to generator power). In each case, the ingenuity of our team and local hosts made the best of each situation. In fact, this team-based problem solving is often a highlight of the brigades.

This brigade was truly an international teaching symposium. Dr. Giegengack taught Honduran surgeons Dr. Pacheco and Dr. Juarez the finer points of DESEK and PK corneal surgery, and then assisted as they took the reins. Dr. Mejias, an ophthalmologist from Venezuela, observed surgery and described ophthalmology education in her home country (Levi and Kathy are now even more grateful for their training!). Dr. Pacheco, a master of Manual Small Incision Cataract Surgery (MSICS) and chief ophthalmologist at the hospital, mentored our senior residents during surgery. As always, our residents were continuously supervised our own experienced faculty. One unique and wonderful aspect of the brigades is that we all operate in one large operating room side-by-side, so we continually learn from (and rescue!) each other.

This trip coincided with the installation of the new San Pedro Sula Lions Club president, Mario del Cid, at a banquet on Friday night. A number of awards and recognitions were given at the banquet, including one to Dr. Foster for his role in connecting the Lions Club and ECHO foundation to the Wake Forest Eye Center. Drs. Giegengack and Martin received a beautiful framed document of appreciation on behalf of Wake Forest Ophthalmology from the Lions Club.

Throughout the week, our Lions Club Hosts made sure we were safe and well-fed. The Lions devoted a great deal of time and effort in planning, preparing, and implementing the brigades.

The last word is always about the patients--the poor of Honduras who receive sight. It is always gratifying and inspiring to see patients blind from cataracts read the eye chart when the patch is removed. This is why it is worth the time and effort: why the Lions Club Hospital Fraternidad opens its doors each morning, why ECHO was founded and is joining forces with Wake, why our alumni contribute, and why our corporate and academic sponsors contribute greater than \$100,000 dollars' worth of supplies, equipment, cornea tissue, and funding for the WakeECHO brigades. Thank You.

Corporate Sponsors (Cornea tissue, surgical supplies, drugs, IOLs, other)

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Academic Sponsors (Grants, Scholarships, and Awards)

Wake Forest School of Medicine Department of Ophthalmology

ECHO foundation

Timothy C. Pennell International Fellowship Fund

Becton Tannenbaum Award

Gracias,

Timothy J. Martin MD and Matthew Giegengack MD

Co-directors of WakeECHO Global Ophthalmology

Global Health Affiliate Faculty





A Venezuelan ophthalmologist observes as Dr. Dickinson performs and discusses phaco surgery.

Dr. Pacheco, chief ophthalmologist at the hospital, gives a personal tutorial to Dr. Kauffman and Dr. Tsamis as he performs manual cataract surgery (MISICS). The Honduran surgeons are the experts of this technique which is rarely performed in the US, and we are fortunate to have these opportunities to learn from them.

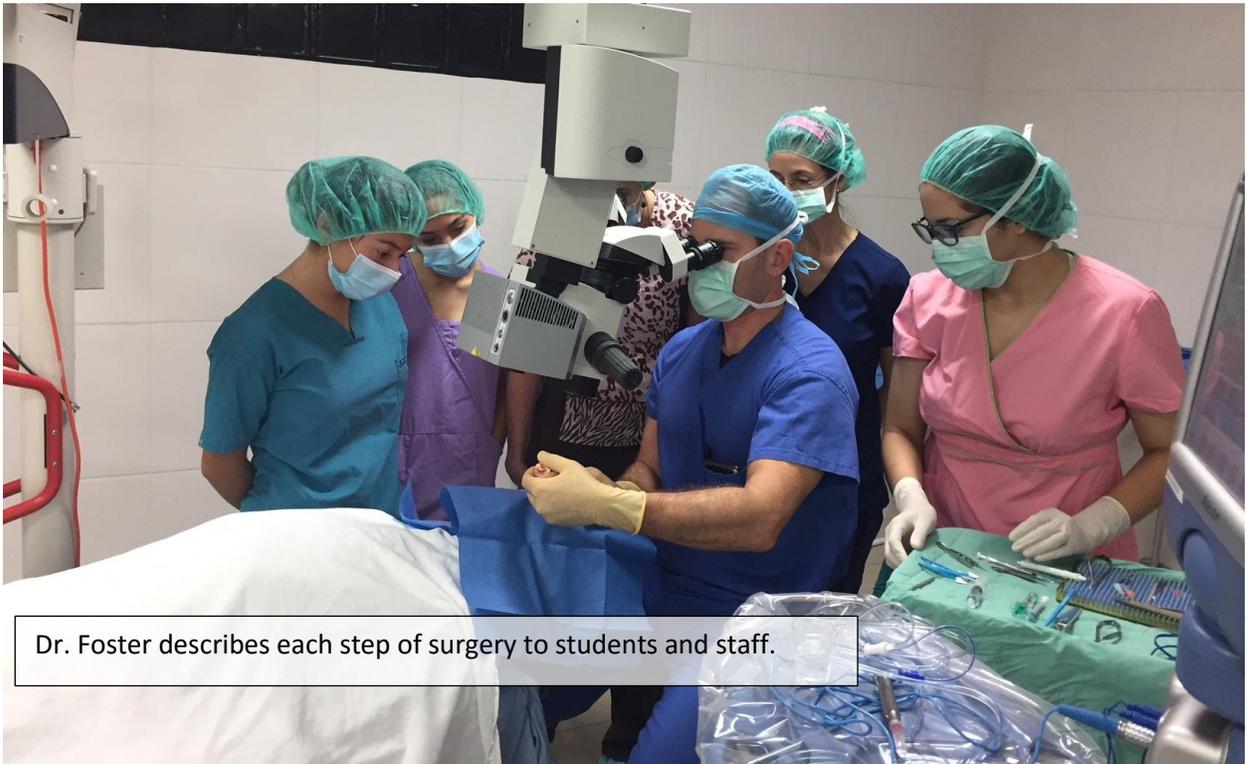




Dr. Tsamis and Dr. Kauffman operate side-by-side, under the watchful eyes of Dr. Dickinson and Dr. Foster.



Dr. Giegengack instructs as Dr. Juarez (staff ophthalmologist at the hospital) performs a DSEK surgery.



Dr. Foster describes each step of surgery to students and staff.



Faye instructs a local surgical tech on setting up and assisting with a Phaco surgery performed by Dr. Dickinson, as this technique is not commonly performed outside of the brigades.



These three bilingual local high school students were an enormous help interpreting in the clinic and OR.

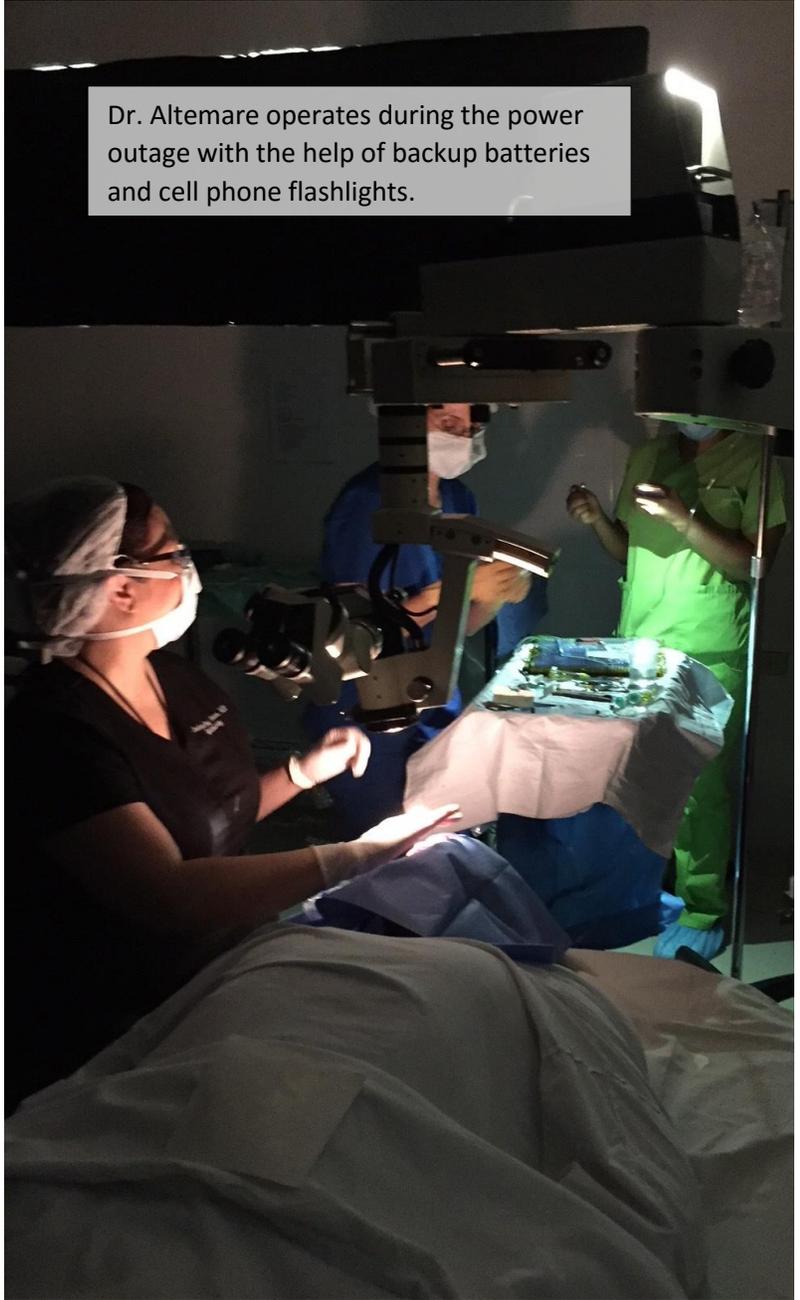


Our residents and students get to participate in all aspects of running an OR: Bethany, Faye, Maria (local medical graduate), and Kathy prepare for a busy OR day.

Martins at work



Dr. Altemare operates during the power outage with the help of backup batteries and cell phone flashlights.





Dr. Kauffman evaluates a post op patient. The examinations are recorded by the clinic staff in the local chart, and also in our own database to track all our patients' progress. The one-week and one-month visits are performed by the local ophthalmologists and entered into a local electronic record, that we can access from Wake.



Dr. Martin, Bethany, and Maria (local physician) in the post-op clinic with patient who improved from Count Fingers visual acuity to 20/40 after (MSICS) cataract surgery.



Yes, we did have to take jackets, ties and dresses to Honduras! It was well worth it to celebrate with the San Pedro Sula Lions Club.



The Wake Forest Eye Center was honored with a declaration of appreciation from the Lions Club.



No brigade is complete without a trip to the market!



After the last post-op were seen on Saturday, our hosts took us to the beach for sun/surf and fellowship/food.

It takes a village: Team photo with just some of the Honduran techs, physicians, and interpreters that offered their expertise and friendship!

