

Reflection on Medical Brigades to Honduras

May 2020

Honduras, just like the rest of the world, is struggling with the coronavirus. The virus has had many unexpected negative consequences. One of them is that Medical groups are not allowed into Honduras. StS's Medical Brigades provide vital medical services in our isolated, rural, part of Honduras.

As we wait for the situation to improve, we hope that the story below will bring a ray of light – and a smile – to all who read it. (And, if anyone ever asks you why you go to Honduras, the story below provides lots of answers.)

In 2007, Dr. Julie Prosseda participated in a Shoulder to Shoulder Medical Brigade to Honduras. She went with Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) to their clinic in the town of Pinares (in San Marcos de la Sierra, Intibucá). In late 2019, Dr. Julie wrote to StS, and asked if it would be possible for her to participate with VCU again. The doctors of VCU happily said “yes,” and Dr. Julie went with them to Honduras in February 2020. **Here is Dr. Julie's very touching reflection.**

Visiting Honduras 13 Years Later

By Dr. Julie Prosseda

I am so thankful that Shoulder to Shoulder allowed me to participate on its most recent brigade. I had an extremely meaningful experience. Everyone on the brigade was so nice and inviting and curious. I enjoyed all of my interactions...with Ilya, Jairo, Alan, Gustavo, and Kate.

We did a home visit on a 15 year old girl named Brenda. I was the first one to document in her chart when she was two years old. Back then we knew she has some sort of disability – most likely MRCP. Currently, she lives with her family and is well cared for.

THINGS ARE BETTER! (Some of this is pure infrastructure....road signs and guardrails....but there were improvements at a municipality and community level too.)



Dr Julie with young patient

Having the perspective of being on one of the first bridges to Pinares in 2007, I can tell you the change is evident and so encouraging. I was fortunate to see my handwriting in quite a few charts.....yes....I saw these patients decades ago – and now they are being treated for chronic conditions, not just acute illnesses.



Medical Student, Lindsay, with youngest patient

StS has done right by the people of San Marcos – through its partnership with the local people and continuity across different sponsoring institutions and leadership. There are roads where there were no roads before. Newly built schools. Water filters. Chimneys. The children look healthier and happier. I saw no scabies or lice which was all we saw in 2007. Back then, I remember one of the maternal child health goals was to get the first time pregnant mothers to

deliver in a hospital and not at home – trying to convince people who thought that you only go to a hospital to die. This time, I made a point to ask about their deliveries and every woman said she delivered in a hospital. Also, I was impressed to see that women are now part of the community Health Committees. Committee members now have a blood pressure cuff for their communities, thanks to VCU's generous Community Development work. The Pinares compound was impressive.

This trip was incredibly meaningful to me. Why? Because things are better in San Marcos de la Sierra!!



View from VCU's Pinares Clinic