

Acceptance

Eleven years ago over Christmas I was feeling ill in my stomach. I had to be convinced to go to an emergency room. I drove myself up there. Seven hours later I was waking up in an operating recovery room with the loss of about sixteen inches of large intestines and my appendix and the gain of a colostomy bag. I had a perforated bowel. Who knew? The colostomy bag was successfully reversed some two months later, thank God. Then about five years ago, I was diagnosed with kidney cancer. A kidney along with the cancer was removed, and I have not had any further difficulties. My first thought in reflecting on those experiences is how grueling and anxiety provoking were those periods of my life. My second thought, a little less self-pitying, is to be grateful for the treatment that in both instances saved my life. Imagine how fortunate I am. Two professional surgeons with years of training and experience were readily available to cut out significant organs from my body. I had health insurance to cover the extreme cost of such an important intervention. It is an incredible world we live in when such highly specialized skilled services can be channeled with ease in order to benefit someone who suffers great physical discomfort even to the risk of death.



Surgery in Honduras by UHMLA

But, this is not so the world over, and it is certainly not the case for us here in this isolated and often forgotten territory of Honduras. For people here, there simply is no access to surgery. The closest hospital might be six hours away. Even so, the surgery may not be available there and the cost would be absolutely prohibitive. Many simply have to accept living with great discomfort, and in some cases there are much worse consequences including shortened life-spans. Having lived in a land of such fortune as the United States, it bears heavy on one's conscience to witness such inequity. Some might shrug their shoulders and say that things are the way they are, and there is little to do to change it. Others find it unacceptable to shrug their shoulders, but instead shoulder the burden. They provide the witness that the inequity does not need to be.



UHMLA / StoS Team

Such a witness is Dr. Rolando Rolandelli and his surgical team from Unidad Hospitalia Móvil de Latino América (UHMLA). Sixteen persons (four surgeons, three anesthesiologists, one assisting physician, three recovery nurses, three operating nurses, one floating nurse, and one translator) came to La Esperanza, HN to provide gastro-intestinal surgeries through the week of March 20 through March 26. They united their good-will with Shoulder to Shoulder and the hospital surgery team and staff. They performed sixty-two procedures (50 surgeries and 12 office procedures). For these sixty-two persons this was not even the most remote possibility, and yet it has happened. Many of these persons literally owe their lives to this incredible undertaking.



Dr. Rolandelli with young patient

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men (sic) do nothing.”

It is not clear who first said this, but John F. Kennedy often cited it. It is a very interesting quote in its premise. It does not attribute the triumph of evil to a lack of good persons, but rather to the lack of good persons’ actions. Most of us are good, but too few of us actually act. Dr. Rolandelli and his team do not accept the inevitability of inequality. They are unwilling to do nothing. What they did, and what they continue to do, actually changes the world. It is not our goodness that is laudatory; it is the willingness to act. Perhaps someday even the people who live in the Frontera of Intibucá will also not need to accept living in physical discomfort and the threat of death when the resources to treat them are readily available in other parts of the world.



Dr. Rolandelli with Dr. Susan Kaye

There are at least sixty-two persons who have benefitted because a few good-willed persons did not accept inequality.

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