

Guatemala

September 19, 2007

Global Links initiated a new program in Guatemala with our 17th container shipment of the year. This container will benefit Hospital Amatitlan, the 170-bed national public hospital just outside of Guatemala City, which serves a population of around 781,482. It was chosen by the ministry of health as a recipient because of its leadership and because of the hope that improving care at this hospital will help to alleviate the extreme pressure on the two public hospitals inside Guatemala City.

The majority of the population served by this hospital live in poverty or extreme poverty on the outskirts of Guatemala City. The population is estimated to be anywhere from 56% to 86% illiterate. The hospital, clearly a busy place during a visit by Global Links staff last March, does an average of 345 surgeries a month and attends around 210 births monthly. Unfortunately, their numbers are increasing most quickly in their emergency room. They registered 68,719 emergency cases last year, most of which are due to traffic accidents and violence, both of which are on the rise, according to hospital director Dra. Maria Elena Godoy.

The prioritized areas that Dra. Godoy wanted to focus on were ob-gyn and emergency because of their high demand. This shipment included 30 hospital beds with mattresses, one birthing table, and some infant scales as well as supplies. We were also able to include a surgical table, a special Stryker gurney, four emergency crash carts, two defibrillators, one laryngoscope, and two boxes of high grade surgical instruments for their ER and surgical units. The shipment contained over 225 boxes of medical and surgical supplies as well.

Hospital director Dra. Godoy was the second woman to become a surgeon in all of Guatemala. In addition to her duties as director, she continues to operate every Wednesday

because she loves it. Many of the high-grade surgical instruments included in the shipment were instruments she specifically requested when she visited Global Links in Pittsburgh, and were based on her intimate knowledge of the operating rooms and their needs.

This shipment was an excellent way to inaugurate Global Links' Guatemala program. Given the needs of the Guatemalan health system and the great partners their hospitals have been so far, it appears that Global Links can have a significant impact on health care there.