

Casa de Luz Medical and Eye Surgery Humanitarian Trip

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Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic

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In 2005, the initial directors of the “Casa de Luz” organization <http://www.casa-de-luz.com> sought a charitable activity as a group effort for interested volunteers, primarily from Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC. After extensive research, they decided to team with Island Impact Ministries, an established 501(c)3 charity with facilities and personnel in the Dominican Republic and Haiti <http://www.islandimpact.net/Home.html>

The goal of Casa de Luz is to provide free surgical and medical eye care in the poorest provinces of the Dominican Republic, primarily for underprivileged children and adults who do not have access to eye medical care.



Modesta, Suzy and I from Island Impact

As part of a medical outreach program, Island Impact has agreed to pre-screen potential patients and to provide local support for a team of surgeons, nurses, and other volunteers for a week of surgical outreach. The first eye mission trip was conducted in 2006 and a trip has been conducted annually since that time.

Funds donated for the mission trip are used to purchase necessary supplies and to pay other allowable operating expenses.

A typical mission trip consists of travel on a Saturday to the Dominican Republic, where the group is met by representatives of Island Impact.



The 2016 mission group

The surgery and clinical support is normally performed at the Ricardo Limardo Public Hospital in Puerto Plata, under an arrangement made by Island Impact. Normally two operating rooms are made available to the mission along with various rooms set up as an eye clinic, supply storage, and patient recovery.

Sunday is spent sorting supplies, examining patients in clinic, and preparing the surgical schedule for the week.



All the stuff we brought to Santiago



Examination and registration of patients to operate

Monday through Friday, the Island Impact staff transports the mission team to the hospital early in the morning and returns the team to the hotel in the evening.



Island Impact transportation and driver José

The Eye clinic team examines hundreds of patients and provide glasses, patches and medication for those who are in need.



Patients coming to the free Eye clinic

The surgical team normally perform 80 to 150 procedures during the course of the week consisting primarily of eye muscle surgery, pterygium removals, and cataract surgery. Some additional minor procedures may also be performed. The mission team performs follow up work and administrative work on Saturday and departs the Dominican Republic on Sunday.

Because the public hospital in Puerto Plata was under construction, this 2016 mission took place in Santiago de los Caballeros, a city in the middle of the Dominican Republic. Here we worked in Hospital Cabral y Báez, a regional university hospital with an Ophthalmic Department where residents are trained.



Ophthalmic department with cataract surgeon

The cataract operations were done in two EYE ORs, the strabismus and pterygium operations in the ORs of the adherent cancer clinic. The free eye clinic which was run by me was done in the ophthalmic department together with the normal consultations.



Our mission in the newspaper

This year mission was also a “teaching mission”, we trained the local residents and some 4th year resident of Washington Children’s Hospital.



Instruction of Dominican residents

Our group existed of 27 persons, mostly from the USA, one cataract surgeon and ophthalmic technician from Canada, one fellow from Lebanon and me and my daughter Isabel (4th year medical student) from Belgium.



Isabel checking VA

Due to the more teaching character we operated less patients, 98 in total and examined just less than 400 patients.



I personally examined and treated 189 patients with glasses, drops and eye patches. Because we worked in the ophthalmic department, we could use 3 split lamps, a lensmeter, an automatic refractometer and 2 indirect ophthalmoscopes. This was a great advantage; we could examine patients in a more complete way as we used to do in Puerto Plata.

We donated all the glasses, patches and lubrication drops we had, unfortunately the airport authorities kept 2 bags full of glasses (one bag with sunglasses and one bag with reading glasses) at the airport.



New sun glasses

As the previous years, again this mission was an unforgettable and satisfying experience. Patients we so grateful for the help we gave them, which gave us an enormous satisfaction.



Ortopad in the Dominican Republic

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