

IOA Teaching Volunteer

November 1-18, 2013

Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India

After 3 missions to the Dominican Republic as an IOA clinical volunteer, I applied in 2012 to be an IOA teaching volunteer. Once accepted I was asked by Cindy Pritchard (director of the IOA Volunteer Program) to volunteer in India. She brought me in contact with dr. P.Vijayalakshmi, chief of the Paediatric Ophthalmology & Strabismus Department of Aravind Eye Hospital in Madurai (www.aravind.org).



The Aravind Eye Care System was founded in 1976 by dr. Govindappa Venkataswamy or dr. "V" who designated his life to eliminate needless blindness in India and who made eye surgery affordable for even the poorest Indians. Patients who come to the hospital may pay what they are able to, or not pay at all, but still get high quality eye care.

Besides helping the poor, Aravind Eye Hospital is also a training institution for ophthalmologists, nurses, refractionists and orthoptists.

During my stay I was teaching the residents, the fellows and the 2 orthoptic students. But many of my lessons were also attended by the 5 paediatric ophthalmologists and their only orthoptist.



I lectured every morning from 7.30 till 8.30 and every evening from 5.00 till 7.00 pm.



One morning I gave a video conference about amblyopia treatment for the paediatric and strabismus departments of the other 5 Aravind Eye Care Hospitals.



In addition to the theoretical lessons, this teaching mission included a lot of practical teaching. During the day, I was able to examine patients with them and demonstrate valuable orthoptic examination techniques.



I was also able to instruct them how to use the synoptophore.



In Aravind Madurai about 2500 patients are seen every day, and more than 200 surgeries are daily performed. Everybody works 6 days a week from 7 in the morning till at least 7 in the evening and on Sunday different teams organize eye camps in the remote villages.

On the last day of my mission trip, I was presented with a typical Indian sari (an outer garment worn by Hindu women). This gift really made me feel as one of them.



My IOA volunteer teaching mission to India was an unforgettable and satisfying experience for me. I hope to be able to return again in the near future. They learned from me and I learned from them.

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this trip for me (www.tshs.eu)**

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