



El Salvador 2016 - Nick Scott, Dr Eva, Zoe, Dr. Gene, Tony, Liz, and Mike. Small, tight-knit team this year.



But the entire group serving to bring medical treatment and spiritual attention to the wonderful people of El Salvador was much larger and included translators, local doctors, and other support members (not shown).

Overall Update about Central America

The climate was drastically different this year due to the army's war on gangs. We heard WAY more requests for prayers for safety for sons and grandsons than previously.



Gang Update - Violence is up since the first of the year. Some non-corrupt politicians have gotten the army involved in jailing gang members and corrupt police. So there is a full out war between gangs, police and the army. Police are being targeted by the gangs. And the army is reacting with "excessive" force. El Salvador's murder rate for 2016 has risen to 90 murders per 100,000 people which is more than double from last year and is now level with the rate in Honduras. The latest major clash happened just 2 weeks ago in an Operation Checkmate round up as seen in these photos.

Five MS-13 leaders - including the gang's alleged "CEO", who posed as an evangelical preacher - were among 77 people arrested across the country after a year-long investigation known as Operation Checkmate.

In a very frustrating note, a prominent evangelical "pastor" was found to be one of the head financial managers for MS-13 (the largest gang there). He was in the gang as a youth, then in jail for 12 years where he became a "pastor," then he used his access/privilege as a pastor to visit gang leaders still in jail. So churches are now being required to report all use of funds.

A new money laundering scheme the gangs are using to protect their millions is to "recruit" (do it or die) citizens to deposit the gang money into their accounts. This spreads the money into thousands of private accounts making it impossible for the government to seize their assets en masse. Ironic since some of this money (\$25M recently paid to MS-13) came from the corrupt government. Which is peanuts compared to the \$475M collected annually in extortion "fees."



Youth Conference - After preaching Sunday morning about "Rekindling Romance in your Marriage," Tony led a time with the youth. Around 50 teens from 2 churches gathered in San Salvador for a talk about the dangers of casual sex. We talked about the four impacts: physical (obvious), emotional, spiritual, and economic. Oreos are used in this demo on the right because germs are microscopic. So the Oreo/cracker demo makes it more obvious what germs are spread during kissing and sex (or even sharing drinks). Andrea did not want to drink after her four "suitsors" backwashed into their cups - Tony's Salvadoran "daughter" is a smart girl.



In a wonderful twist of God's perfect timing, Tony was able to encourage some of the young men whom he has gotten to know through the years. Girls had broken up with them recently, and he was able to encourage them that God will provide the perfect wife for them when the time is right. For now, they can work to become men worthy of the women God has planned.



More medicine issues - Unfortunately, this year's medicine order had not been delivered, so we were going to be out of many of the most needed medicine. Communication is a major issue when working in the developing world. But Dr Eva got as many meds as she could from the States on short notice, and again we set up a drug sorting business in San Salvador - not as sketchy as it sounds. We also had to pray that there would be enough meds for the week.

As we have said previously, in our clinic model we charge \$1.75 to see the doctor - unless that is impossible (total cost is around \$6 per visit). This allows the patients to have dignity in providing for their own medical needs. Our goal is to get to where the clinic expenses are split evenly three ways between the patient, the local church and Total Health. Keep in mind that around 50% of the country makes less than \$4 per day. The average income is \$250 per month, and a bilingual call center worker makes around \$500-\$1000 per month. For reference, monthly rent for a one bedroom apartment is around \$400 in San Salvador. Of course, the economic conditions in these countries is volatile, and even when the local health improves and people are able to work more, the patients and local partners may not be able to cover their third of the expenses. But we believe this is a healthy model for which to aim.

Soyapongo - Monday and Tuesday - The new clinic in Soyapongo is almost ready to start; we are shooting for an October launch. Dr. Valencia is just volunteering for free now! Monday and Tuesday we saw 225 patients and 15 people accepted Christ's gift of salvation. Nick Scott was



Dr. Valencia with patients

able to pray with people for the first time as was Javier our translator who took some turns by himself. We also encouraged many other fellow believers in the assurance of their relationship with God. One family came through separately, and the father gave his life to Christ, then later his wife and teenage daughter did too - totally separate!



Nick and Javier with Anistasio

So many tough discussions: One family cannot attend this church because their 17 year old son would be killed if he crossed gang lines. The mom and young child had to sneak in the back door of the facility because they live in the "wrong" territory.

Another mother was in tears because her son was told by the gangs if he did not leave El Salvador, they would kill him. So he is scheduled to be smuggled out of the country in October. The mother was so frightened because illegally fleeing the violence in this country is an incredibly dangerous endeavor. As an example, another young woman was being smuggled out but was imprisoned in Mexico, held in a basement and repeatedly raped for 2 years. The family searched for her for 2 years, and finally found her recently. She no longer speaks and squints constantly because she lived in mostly darkness all that time. Every mother I prayed with is deathly afraid for her children every single day!



A 75 year old mom wanted to get well so she could work to support her daughter. The daughter had a C-Section gone bad (nicked her intestine), the baby died, and the rest was way too gory to repeat. Two surgeries later the daughter had lost 2/3rds of intestines, is wheelchair-bound, and they will not try surgery again. They are waiting for either God to heal her or take her home. Since the country spends an average of \$136 per person in medical care, the outcomes are miserable in El Salvador. By comparison, the US currently spends an average of about \$8200 per person annually. So prayer is often the only answer.



This woman in the print dress had us all crying as she told of God's miraculous healing from brain cancer. The doctors told her, 'you can have the surgery and probably end up a vegetable or die in 6 months.' Her biggest fear was that she would lose her memory and not remember her love for God. She said that the Lord visited her in her home, and although she was extremely afraid of Him, He said she would be okay. She had the surgery and is fine and still praising God years later!

This girl came in living with Cerebral Palsy. It was heartbreaking for Dr. Gene because there was little that he could do to help with the seizures she suffers. The Mom said she was going to a church known for extreme indoctrination, so I was just going to pray with them quickly. But God prompted me to ask how long she had been with that church; it was just a short while. So although she had been taught the exact opposite of Biblical principles, after seeing what the Bible actually says, she received Christ and believed on His name and became a child of God (John 1:12).



La Libertad - Wed & Thur - We saw about 200 patients in two days. 24 people put their trust in Christ for eternity.



This 82 year old couple have been married for 56 years and recently started coming to the church. Both wanted a Bible of their own :)

We got an update on the gang activity in La Libertad from Giovanni (the assistant pastor there). He grew up in MS-13 territory, but because he became a Christian at 13 years old, they did not force him to join the gang. They still respect Christianity here. But 90% of his childhood friends are either in the gangs or dead.



Giovanni told us the story of his sister and small baby escaping El Salvador for the US. While it was an extremely dangerous endeavor, it was safer than most because her husband was able to raise the \$5,000 needed to pay the coyotes. Interestingly if you do not have a small child it is \$9,000. When they crossed into the US, they gave themselves up to US Customs who kept them safe until their court date. At which time they were released into the general population. If you are struggling with this being "ok," read my April report entitled DR 16 for the nine perspectives on immigration (or ping me and I will send you another copy).



Kayla - Daughter of Pastor Ivo

We heard many stories of people frightened and saddened for their loved ones who had made the crossing to the States. The Latin culture is very family-oriented, so breaking apart families, even when necessary to survive, is more difficult than for traditional North Americans. Those at the most risk are 15-20 year old boys. They are heavily recruited or killed if they are in the wrong place. Young ladies are safer now that the gangs are in hiding. The key for them is to be polite but show no interest in the gang members. Pastor Ivo's 15 year old daughter Kayla reports no problems if she follows that model.

Guayabo - Friday - We only saw 70 patients up on the volcano, which gave Dr Eva time to organize and record all of the medicines. Most of the patients were from the CDI, but we still saw 5 more people come into an eternal relationship with God.



Victor and Dr Inri's encounter near Guyabo- They drove into the countryside to look at property. As they drove they passed many people on the small road who called out warm greetings to Dr. Inri. At the 6 miles out mark, Victor decided to turn around as the property was too remote. The Army came out of the forest from a gang hide out raid, asked their business and for their



papers. At the same time, a mom with 4 kids came out of the forest. All the kids ran up to Dr. Inri hugging him. The Army decided they were safe and let them go. Victor was pretty nervous earlier, so he gladly gave the mom and kids a ride to civilization for rescuing them :) Dr. Inri has such a great reputation on the mountain. He has definitely won their trust even as an outsider!

Church in Guayabo - Dr Inri still holds a service on Sunday mornings and a Bible Study on Tuesday afternoons up on the volcano.

Safely Home - In total, we saw over 480 patients and 44 came to Christ. Exhausted, we arrived at home contented that the Lord had used us powerfully as a team this week!

