



*Humanitarian Medical
Mission to Linares, Chile
International Surgical
Mission Support
& the
Gabriela Mistral
Foundation*

April 2013

**TO THE WORLD, I MAY BE ONE PERSON
BUT TO ONE PERSON, I MAY BE THE WORLD**

On behalf of the Board of the ***Gabriela Mistral Foundation***, I want to thank you for your support and interest in the Humanitarian Mission to Chile of ***International Surgical Mission Support*** which was done in collaboration of our Foundation. I was asked to handle this project on behalf of the Foundation. I should like to take a moment to share with you some details about the Mission which gave me the privilege of being with an outstanding group of human beings-- the members of Team NY of ISMS-- during the mission to Chile.



When asked by the Board to travel with the team to Chile, I gladly accepted, though I must admit that I did not know what to expect as a member of a group mission such as this one. This uncertainty was especially acute in my case, because I have no medical training at all. I can safely say now that I had no idea! All the expectations I had were exceeded in leaps and bounds by the experience I had. Nothing could have ever prepared me for the most wonderful experience in my life. From a medical point of view, the operations performed not only took care of the patients' urgent health issues but they also gave the patients and their families a new life. Each case is a moving story that I wish I could write about at length, but also and most importantly, is the story of the wonderful compassion and care on the part of each member of the team towards each case and every patient. The patients's scars will heal and the pain will pass but the memories of the generosity, kindness and compassion they received will be forever treasured by those they helped.

I cannot find the appropriate words to thank our Board, Mrs. Cecilia Morel, First Lady of Chile and ISMS for their trust in me to make this mission a reality.

Gloria Garafulich-Grabois

After two months of preparations and coordination, on Thursday, April 4, 2013, I and nineteen members of Team NY of ***International Surgical Mission Support*** (ISMS) along with approximately 90 pieces of luggage that included medical equipment, medicines, supplies, and all materials needed for the Humanitarian Mission and plus our personal luggage, were ready to go!

This project began in the middle of December 2012 after a conversation with my friend Isabel Sepulveda who mentioned that she knew a doctor from a medical organization that had expressed an interest in going to Chile for a Medical Mission. Isabel told me that a number of people had been contacted and that although they all expressed interest and great enthusiasm, there had been no clear commitment on their part to make this mission a reality. After consultation with the Board of the ***Gabriela Mistral Foundation*** and with their support we went to work with the assistance of the **Hon. Julio Fiol, Consul General of Chile in New York**.

At first, we faced many difficulties. As Christmas approached, we were busy sending emails and making calls. It was the end of the year and the start of the summer holidays and although our commitment never wavered, we thought it was "Mission Impossible!" It was the great enthusiasm, commitment and support of the First Lady of Chile Mrs. Cecilia Morel that provided the impetus that got the mission on its way. The immediate response and support received from the Minister of Health, Dr. Jaime Manalich and his staff most specially Dr. Anibal Alcazar and Ms. Alejandra Meniconi were also an invaluable help. In early February the preparations began!

It was requested that the mission take place in the city of Linares, in the Maule Region--188 miles South of Santiago -- a city in one of the poorest regions of the country and a city that was greatly affected by the 2010 earthquake.

So, after hundreds of emails, dozens of calls, with Dr. Ravi Kothuru, Chief of Mission of ISMS, Dr. Alcazar and Ms. Meniconi in April we were ready to go!

Getting to the airport and arranging everything to be checked was a major undertaking. This was made possible by the invaluable help of **Mr. Pedro Pablo Aresti, Trade Commissioner of ProChile** in New York and **Mr. Matias Lagos of LanCargo** in Miami.

After the overnight flight from New York, a beautiful sunrise over the Andes Mountains welcomed us as we landed. We were met by Dr. Ruben Bravo, Director of the Hospital in Linares and Mr. Pablo Rosas of the Ministry of Health. As soon as we cleared customs we continued the journey to our destination: Linares, where we arrived 3.5 hours later and went directly to the Hospital. Upon our arrival, we were met by the hospital staff and the press, but, even more importantly by over 25 patients who needed to have a second screening and evaluation by the ISMS team. At the end of the day, we were given an official welcome by the Regional Governor of Maule Ms. Maria Eugenia Hormazabal, Senator Sergio Larrain, Mr. Romilio Gutierrez, Representative of the Maule Region as well as a representative of the Mayor of Linares and Dr. Felipe Uribe, Director of the Maule Region Health Services at the Governor's Office.



By the end of the following day, more than 100 patients had been seen and screened by the ISMS medical team, our equipment and supplies had been successfully organized and the schedule of surgeries had been done.

Every person at the Hospital of Linares, the Director, doctors, surgeons, nurses and support staff were most welcoming, cooperative and wonderfully kind. Their support and understanding of our needs was very important.

During the mission local doctors and medical students in residence at Hospital de Linares were invited to observe the surgeries performed. The surgeons in our team also took the time to teach the local doctors the new techniques and the equipment used for some of the surgeries.

Almost all of equipment that ISMS brought to Linares was left as a donation to the Hospital.

In the middle of the week, we received the special visit of Dr. Luis Castillo, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health, who came to meet the team and thank them for their humanitarian work and also to meet some of the patients.

We were very pleased that Isabel was also able to visit Linares for a day.





The next few days were very busy and very long. Although our days started by 7:15 am and ended as late as 9pm, nobody felt tired. Close to 100 people from Linares and Talca areas were operated on. They were children, adults and seniors. The operations ranged from a corrective plastic surgery intervention on a 2 year old child to a very complex colon cancer operation on an 82 year old man. Some people had been waiting for these specialized surgeries for as little as 3 years and as long as 28 years. Each case represents an untold story that would make one cry or smile. How I wish I could share them all with you!

And then there were the unscheduled cases. I most specially think of the mother who came to us after learning about the mission on the television after the visit of Dr. Luis Castillo. She arrived at the hospital in the afternoon and stayed until late at night but because we did not know she was there we did not see her until she came back the next morning before 6 am with her 14 year old daughter asking . . . pleading for help. I met with her and after the young lady was examined and evaluated, and although our schedule was completely full, Dr. Ravi Kothuru agreed to perform the surgery. Among tears, the mother thanked us for helping her daughter and mentioned that “now at least one of her children would be well.” When asked her about this, we found out that her 20 year old son suffered from the same condition. How could we not try to help him as well? The following day, Dr. Kothuru performed the two operations. First, on the 14 year old girl, and as she was leaving the operating room, her 20 year old brother was being brought in for his procedure. Both, brother and sister are now well and happy. Their mother told us time and time again that we had given her children a “new life.” This, is just one of many many such stories.

The mission to Linares also included a donation of equipment valued at US\$27,800 as well as medicines and medical supplies.

And so, after the surgeries were done and the farewells were said, we left, leaving behind a city that it is now most special and close to our hearts, and our newfound friends, patients and colleagues with whom we now share a special bond. We thank each and every one of them for their hospitality, kindness, friendship and trust.



Visit with Mrs. Cecilia Morel, First Lady of Chile

On April 16, 2013 the entire team was received in the Offices of the First Lady of Chile Mrs. Cecilia Morel in the Presidential Palace “La Moneda.” The event was attended by Dr. Luis Castillo, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health and other representatives of the Ministry of Health.

Dr. Ravi Kothuru and Dr. Medhat Allam, Founders of ISMS and myself expressed our deep appreciation to the First Lady for her interest and commitment to this project.

All the members of the team fell in love with our beautiful country and our people. ISMS has expressed a desire to return to Chile again for another mission. We are grateful to Isabel for having presented this project to the ***Gabriela Mistral Foundation.***



The Team

International Surgery Mission Support, Team NY

Dr. Ravi Kothuru, Chief of Mission
 Dr. Medhat Allam
 Dr. Rajesh Patel
 Dr. Vito Alama
 Dr. Geri Schmidt
 Dr. Mehul Mehta
 Vienna Charoennimuang, RN
 Patricia Mitchell, RN
 Christopher Torres, CRNA
 Michael Sherwood, CRNA
 MaryEllen Spandonis, RN
 Hollysue Deos, RN
 Erin Grismer, RN
 Grace McCarthy, RN
 Ellen Herfeld, RN
 Robert Mineo, CRNA
 Melissa McDaniel, Surgical Assistant
 Nathaniel Miller

Gabriela Mistral Foundation

Gloria Garafulich-Grabois, Director

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CHILE

Mrs.. Cecilia Morel,
First Lady of Chile
 Dr. Jaime Manalich,
Minister of Health
 Dr. Luis Castillo,
Undersecretary, Ministry of Health
 Dr. Anibal Alcazar,
Advisor, Ministry of Health
 Alejandra Meniconi,
Legal Department Ministry of Health

Hospital de Linares

Dr. Ruben Bravo, Director
 Dra. Debbie Fuster
 Dr. Alvaro Encina
 Dr. Jose Martinez
 Dr. Carlos Brower
 EU Maria Maureira
 EU Maria Pereira
 Gabriela Aravena
 Julieta Navea



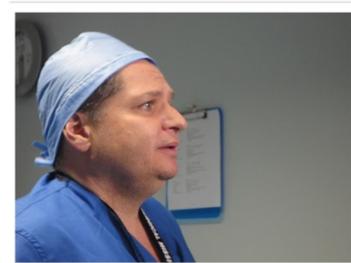
DR. RUBEN BRAVO
 & DR. GERI SCHMIDT



DR. MEHUL MEHTA
 & PATIENTS



DR. RAVI KOTHURU



DR. VITO ALAMIA

**SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE WHO HELPED US
ACCOMPLISH THIS MISSION**

UNITED STATES

Honorable Julio Fiol	Consul General of Chile in New York
Mr. Pedro Pablo Aresti	Trade Commissioner of Chile in New York
Mr. Matias Lagos	LanCargo, Miami

CHILE

Mrs. Cecilia Morel Montes	First Lady of Chile
Dr. Jaime Manalich	Minister of Health, Chile
Dr. Luis Castillo	Undersecretary, Ministry of Health
Dr. Anibal Alcazar	Ministry of Health
Mrs. Alejandra Meniconi	Attorney, Ministry of Health
Sr. Pablo Rosales	Attorney, Ministry of Health
Dr. Felipe Uribe	Director of Health Services, Maule Region
Dr. Ruben Bravo	Director, Hospital de Linares
Dr. Debbie Fuster	Assistant Director, Hospital de Linares
Dr. Alvaro Encina	Chief of Surgery, Hospital de Linares
Dr. Carlos Brower	Chief of Anesthesiology, Hospital de Linares
Ms. Julieta Navae	Health Services, Maule Region
Mrs. Maria Maureira	Head Nurse, Hospital de Linares
Mrs. Gabriela Aravena	Head Nurse, OR, Hospital de Linares
Sr. Jose Fuentes	Driver, Hospital de Linares
Sr. Jacob Gaete	Driver, Hospital de Linares

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Mrs. M. Eugenia Hormazabal	Governor, Maule Region
Mr. Rolando Renteria	Mayor Linares, Municipality of Linares
Mr. Hernan Larrain	Senator, Maule Region
Mr. Romilio Gutierrez	Representative, Maule Region

OTHER SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

Ms. Paula Torrejon	AdsMundo, Chile
Ms. Carolina Banduc	Lan Airlines, Chile
Sr. Rodrigo Barrera	Rotary Club, Linares

Hotel Curapalihue, Linares - Termas de Quinamavida, Linares -
Hotel Bonaparte, Santiago - Raul Correa y Familia Restaurant, Santiago



*Oficina de la Primera Dama
de Chile
Sra. Cecilia Morel*



Thank you! ~ ¡Gracias!

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