

Mead Minutes: Hello from Santo Domingo

Nov 5, 2017 · By CURE International · [In The Field](#)



Dr. Tim Mead at work

Hello from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic!! Warm, humid weather has marked my time here. Hurricane Irma was gracious to this part of the DR and only soaked the area but did not cause any major destruction. The hospital is running well. I am enjoying my Dominican coffee each morning, although the staff cannot believe I drink it without sugar.

CURE Dominicana resides in a busy area of Santo Domingo. All day long, you hear the honking of car horns and the rumble of vehicles. The hospital is six stories tall and compact. The few parking spaces are guarded for staff use. CURE has all the basic needs but could use more space to stretch out.

Driving in the DR is a challenge. Cars weave from lane to lane honking as others cut them off. Motorcycles follow no rules that I can understand. The drivers appear out of nowhere and, suddenly, I must brake to avoid a crash. Taxis are like taxis all over, but most here seem to lack brake lights. In the Philippines, the weaves are similar and motorcycle drivers as crazy, but the speed limit is so slow—20 km/hour (12.4 miles/hour)—and the drivers are mostly polite, so the risk is less. Nairobi has a similar glut of cars, reminding me of a slowly moving parking lot at times. Driving in the U.S., especially the highways, is barely a challenge. I must always remind myself—my wife and kids often remind me to drive less aggressively. “Dad,” they say, “No Philippines turns!”



Colonial Santo Domingo, historical site

The clinics are busy as many children have needs. Crooked feet and crooked limbs are seen across the globe. The DR has its share. I was blessed with Dr. Alicia, a young doctor waiting to start residency, who acted as my translator. Alicia did a great job getting both parties on the same page. Alicia was also a joy to get to know. I have also learned some of the history and geography of the DR from her. This is my fourth trip here and each has been different; all have been enjoyable.

Thursday was a busy operating day for CURE Dominicana. In one operating room, we did a series of four patients needing tendon transfers for their feet. The feet were pulling inward, so a tendon on the inner side, the anterior tibialis, was moved to a more central location to assist in pulling the foot straight. I enjoy performing and teaching this operation. This operation usually works very well assisting in gait and also is easy to consistently perform.

The other room started with hip surgery. A young girl's hips were starting to slide out of joint due to a muscle imbalance. Both hips were cut and plates were applied to change the angle to a stable position. The next one was young boy who had a special smile. He also loved to jump and run. He was covered with brown spots called "café au' lait" suggesting a malady called neurofibromatosis. He had a tibia in his leg with a congenital nonunion. This deformity can be the bane of orthopedic surgeons. The bone does not like to heal, and if you can get it to heal, it often fractures later. We removed a rod; the tibia broke beyond the tip. Then we placed a firm plate after cleaning up the tissues and abnormal bone. All looked healthy, but I have been fooled before.

The next young girl had a previous surgery elsewhere for a developmental, dislocated hip. The dislocation recurred. Also, there was a plate to remove and an unusually placed metal pin. Hmm... I was working with Dominican Orthopedic Surgeon, Dr. Martinez. We removed the plate, cleaned the joint of soft tissue as well as the pin, repeated the osteotomy shortening, which changed the angle and rotation of the femur, applied a plate, and placed the ball in the correct location. Now, the range of stability was good. Hoorah! The capsule of the joint was repaired and tightened. A cast helped maintain the reduction.

The final case was to correct a crooked foot by moving tendons and lengthening others. At the end of the day, we all were tired, but pleased with how all the surgical cases went. On Friday, the kids looked remarkably well. Most were smiling, but our hip surgery patients less so. I am always amazed how well children do with major surgical procedures. God does indeed bless them.

Dr. Santana is the full-time orthopedic surgeon at CURE Dominicana. I enjoyed working with him. Santana has a caring heart and a good thought process. He is loved by the staff as you can see by the attached picture. Look at the fancy hat, tie, and cake they gave him for his birthday! Wow!



Happy Birthday Dr. Santana!

CURE International has a special calling to care for children. As I travel the globe to various CURE hospitals, I am thrilled to meet so many dedicated CURE team members. CURE is not merely a group of hospitals, but rather a holistic, care giving group of individuals serving God.