

INTERNATIONAL EYE INSTITUTE

2025 NEWSLETTER



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Our Team Leaders

Read the mission trip reports from our May and November teams at Hospitalito Atitlan, Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala:

- ❖ Dr. Pulin Shah Oschner New Orleans, LA
- ❖ Dr. David Dance North Idaho Eye Coeur d'Alene, ID

Learn how you can help make our vision a success!

News from the May Hospitalito Atitlan Team

By Dr. Pulin Shah

Mission Update: Santiago Atitlan - May 2025 Trip

We are thrilled to share the highlights and progress from our two incredible surgical mission trips to Santiago Atitlan in 2025, beginning with the May trip. Despite initial travel challenges, our teams delivered essential surgical care and significantly advanced our local teaching program.

May 2025 Trip: Success & Heartfelt Moments

Our May trip faced initial flight delays, but the team's spirit ensured a very smooth and productive week of surgery and teaching.

The team performed a total of **60 sight-fixing surgeries** in four days (Mon-Thurs):

- ❖ 46 Cataract Surgeries
- ❖ 7 Strabismus Procedures (Pediatric)
- ❖ 4 Pterygium Removals
- ❖ 3 Corneal Transplants

Two cases stand out from the May trip, illustrating the power of sight restoration:

- **A New Lease on Life:** An elderly gentleman, frail and isolated by years of darkness from bilateral white cataracts, was instantly transformed. Upon removing the patch, his blank face melted into an animated smile as he saw his daughter's face for the first time in years.
- **The Wonder of Color:** A Tz'utujil-speaking lady, overcome with gratitude after cataract removal, gave us many blessings. She then looked in awe at Dr. Sarah Covey and reached out to touch her fair white skin—a sight she had never appreciated before. Her shock and wonder brought joy and laughter to the whole team.

November 2025 Trip: Progress and Program Growth

By Dr. Dave Dance

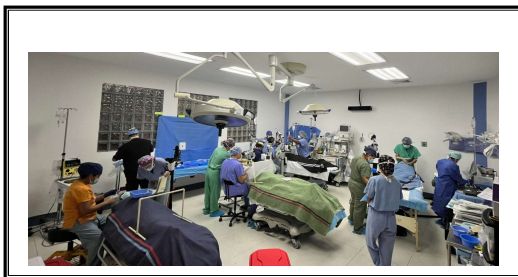
Our **November trip** was a resounding success, demonstrating the maturation of the local program and the outstanding progress of our fellow, Dr. Anali. This seasoned team included **Dr. Julio De Leon, Dr. Mark Jessen, Dr. Drew Thomas, Dr. David Dance, Dr. Anali Vasquez, Beth Garcia** (Team Coordinator), and team **Maddy, Josh, Cathy, Vero and Ali**.

Surgical Results (November)

The team performed an impressive **80 surgeries** this week:

- ❖ 66 Cataracts
- ❖ 5 Corneal Transplants
- ❖ 9 Pterygiums
- ❖ *Plus 4 other complex procedures.*

A huge thank you to all volunteers, especially:



- **Beth Garcia** (the glue that holds the team together).
- **Dr. Julio de Leon** (named the **See International Humanitarian of the Year**, who continues to mentor and fix everything).

Trip Highlight: Dr. Anali's Progress

The highlight of the November trip was seeing **Dr. Anali** hit her stride. She performed **16 cases** independently this week and is operating near the level of a trained U.S. resident.

- **Teaching Focus: Dr. Mark Jessen** was a patient and expert mentor, using the MicroRec to great effect.
- **Future Plans:** Dr. Anali is anticipated to be ready to operate **independently and safely** by the end of her fellowship in April.
- **A Commitment to the Mission:** In exchange for the donated Oertli phaco machine, Dr. Anali signed a contract committing to donate her surgeon fee for 100 surgeries, ensuring the program's sustainability.
- **Heartfelt Gratitude:** The emotional highlight was hearing Dr. Anali's deep gratitude: *"I truly thank God for having put you and each member of your team in my path. You are incredible people, with huge hearts, and it has been a blessing to learn from you."*

Looking Ahead: Our Partnership Continues

We continue to dedicate time to **teaching the local fellow**, recognizing this as the most challenging and valuable work we do. Our long-term goal is to continue supporting the growth of self-sustaining ophthalmic services at Hospitalito.

We look forward to continuing this fulfilling and productive project!

Remember the frail gentleman who saw his daughter's face for the first time in years? Or the lady amazed by the sight of new colors? Your support makes these moments happen.

Don't let distance stand in the way of changing a life. **Join our mission today.** A small donation can cover the cost of supplies for a cataract surgery, opening up a world of possibilities for someone living in darkness. How You Can Help ~ Donate securely online today!

Give the Gift of Sight by going to ~ <https://www.eyegive.org/blank>

Share Our Story: Help us reach more supporters by sharing this newsletter!