

Grenada Elective:

A Blog from Dr. Elaine Hulteng's experience during her Spring 2019 trip with Dr. Jonathan Cosin



Dr. Jonathan Cosin and Dr. Elaine Hulteng with the amazing Sister Baptiste

Friday we arrived in St. George's, Grenada after an uneventful flight and customs line. Our driver (from the Ministry of Health) brought us to St. George's University Club where we were to stay for the week.



View from breakfast each morning

It's a beautiful place on Prickly Bay across from the medical school campus.

We dropped off our luggage and headed to the hospital where we gathered with the "house officers" and "consultants" (basically residents and attendings) for a gynecologic cancer overview lecture by Dr. Cosin.

Dr. Cosin's lecture



Saturday was busy.

We headed to the Onc clinic where we spent the day seeing patients. The patients had waited months to see Dr. Cosin, coming from all over the island (sometimes the small island of Carriacou) only to wait hours to see him in the hot humid line outside.



Our clinic for the day



Several of his long-term patients that he has been following for over a decade made the journey to see him. They were so happy to see him and thankfully were still cancer free.

The truly heartbreaking part of the trip was the number of cases of cervical cancer, especially in young women, that we don't normally see in this volume or advanced state in the US.

More than once we had to tell the patient their cancer was too advanced and Grenada does not have the capability to provide the radiation that could cure them. These patients have to try to go to Cuba or Trinidad or try to visit a family member in the U.S.

Every patient we planned to take to the OR was asked to find at least two people to donate blood to the hospital as they don't have a formal blood bank with a good supply.



At the end of the day we booked 25 cases and made our OR schedule for the week.



View from the Onc Clinic



Sunday was a day off.

Being a religious country nothing much is open on Sundays.

The beach however is open!

I headed to Grand Anse Beach, a local white sands beach. The SGU club also had kayaks which they let take into Prickly Bay.

Monday through Friday we headed to the operating “Theatre.” We typically performed 3 cases a day. Also joining us daily were 2-4 first or second year SGU med students who were usually stepping foot in the OR and scrubbing for the first time.

Over the week we did a vulvar excision, a diagnostic laparoscopy, and 13 open cases. This included a few radical hysterectomies for cervical cancer, four hysterectomies with staging for endometrial cancer, one debulking, a hyst for a 24wk uterus and one for cervical dysplasia, and a variety of cases for benign socked-in endometriomas.



Each night after our cases we would round on our exceptionally grateful and sweet patients. The “gynae” ward roomed 6 patients to a pod with only dividers between pods and curtains (that were rarely drawn) between beds. Each patient brought their own linens. The private ward, (if patients had the cash to pay for it), had private rooms and some even had AC, but they still provided their own linens.

Being on top of a hill the views of St. George’s were stunning.

The end of the week was bittersweet, I was eager to go home to family and friends but sad to be leaving the wonderful people and experience of Grenada.