

2007 - Ghia Nghia, Nha Trang

Drs Zelikovsky (urology), Chamberlain and Li (general and pancreatobiliary surgery), and Kasmin (gastroenterology). We started our tour with several days in the mountain town of Ghia Nghia, with a local population numbering in the thousands, but serving the medical needs of a large rural region. The hospital is mostly open air, resembling a small school building rather than a hospital. We arrive with donated urologic and endoscopic supplies, and a plan to teach techniques in urologic and general surgery, as well as gastroenterology. We make rounds on the general medicine and surgical "wards" – squat buildings with 4 rooms, each containing 6 or 8 cots covered with bamboo mat. The patients occasionally share a bed, and are attended to by family members as much as by nursing. The gastroenterologist, Dr Van Thuy, introduces us to his small endoscopy room and staff. A single modern Olympus gastroscope is hanging next to the video processor, and adjacent to his only biopsy forceps, which is broken!! He is overwhelmed (and almost began to cry) when we unpack 50 (!!!) donated forceps from Olympus, Cook, and Boston Scientific, as well as foreign body retrieval devices and band ligators to control hemorrhage. We spend several days performing endoscopy – all gastroscopy without sedation – and we teach them some maneuvers with the new equipment.

We travel to the coastal city of Nha Trang, population 1,000,000. The provincial hospital is a much bigger affair in a lovely walled complex. The main hospital is 8 stories tall, with an open feel. There are some European tourists in the hospital, mostly moped injuries, as Nha Trang is a popular beach resort. As we tour the Khanh Hoa provincial hospital, we appreciate how much more modern its operating rooms are, and are equally impressed by the reasonably modern two bed endoscopy unit with an automated endoscope disinfectant. Nonetheless, as we make rounds, we see how crowded the hospital's inpatient wards are, as most beds are occupied by two patients! We review CT scans and examine patients with jaundice and abdominal pain. Our intent is to perform ERCP (pancreatic-biliary endoscopy) in order to treat bile duct stones and pancreatic cancer. Nha Trang has the x ray equipment in their operating room to allow this, and we brought the special endoscope which permits access to the bile duct via the mouth. Dr Jerome Siegel had introduced ERCP to this hospital during a past visit, and we were there to continue to train Nha Trang's young endoscopists, Dr Hai, how to perform this procedure. With supplies again donated to the hospital by our friends from industry, we tutored the young endoscopists in a number of procedures and successfully treated about 10 patients over 3 days. Meanwhile, Dr Zelikovsky is in the operating room demonstrating renal stone and tumor resections, and Dr Chamberlain is performing biliary and hepatic surgery.



Dr Kasmin and Dr Van Thuy performing gastroscopy in Ghia Nghia



Drs Kasmin, Zelikovsky, and Chamberlain with our host physicians in Ghia Nghia



Dr Kasmin with Dr Hai making rounds in Nha Trang



Dr Thui performing gastroscopy in Nha Trang



Surgeons exchange their shoes (left rack) for shared sandals (on right, all size 9 or smaller) before entering the O.R.'s.



Dr Hai and Dr Kasmin performing ERCP in Nha Trang

