CONNECTING THE DOTS: FROM RURAL COMMUNITIES OF SOUTH CAROLINA TO RURAL COMMUNITIES OF GUATEMALA

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Demographics of South Carolina

- Hispanic population is the fastest growing demographic group in the US
- According to the US Census, the Hispanic population in the US increased by ~ 60% between 1990 and 2000
- This group is growing even faster in the South
- Between 1990 and 2000, the Hispanic population in SC increased by 211%
- Between 2000 and 2006, the Hispanic population in SC increased 58.4%
- These numbers do not include undocumented persons of Hispanic origin

Clemson University

- A land grant institution established as Clemson College in 1893, became Clemson University in 1964
- It serves a predominantly rural area of the state
- Largest nearby cities are:
  - Anderson, 20 min drive with a population of 26, 242
  - Greenville, an hour drive with a population of 57, 428
  - Atlanta and Charlotte are both a 2 hour drive
- Total enrollment
  - Fall 2009 = 19, 111 students
  - ~78% White

GUATEMALA

- A country in Central America, slightly smaller than the state of Tennessee
- Total population (thousands) 13, 686
- Population living in urban areas – 49%
- Gross national income per capita ($4690)
- Under-5 mortality rate (per 1000 live births) 34
  - Percentage of total deaths (WHO, 2008)
    - Pneumonia = 20
    - Diarrhea = 19
    - Prematurity = 19
- Births attended by skilled health personnel 31%

A Partnership Emerges

- 2005 – Traveled with Volunteers in Medical Missions to Guatemala
  - Carlos Nevarez
  - Pixabaj
- 2006 – Returned to Guatemala with 8 nursing students – Colegio Cristiano Pixabaj established
- 2007 – 2nd trip with 6 nursing students and Assistant Professor from School of Education
- 2008 – Dr. Weatherford and her husband begin working with teachers at the school
- 2010 – 3rd trip with 10 nursing students

Promotora De Salud Program

- *Promotora* – indigenous natural leaders who live and work in low resource communities (Arizmendi & Ortiz, 2004)
  - Usually women from the community
- Based on the concept of empowerment and the belief that the people of the community want to improve the health of their family and their neighbors
- Has been used successfully in Mexico and areas along US border
- Similar to the concept of community health workers in international public health

Information Gathering

- Community assessment through key informant interviews
- Community surveys and home visits
- Visited local hospital
- Invited 10 women from the community

Information Gathering

- Entering the community
  - Church services
  - Celebration – Day of the Dead – Nov 1, All Saints Day
- Based on interviews, statistics, previous knowledge of the community, and home assessments, we developed a plan to address the most common health problems

Shared Knowledge

- Handwashing/Hygiene
- Vital Signs
  - Pulse, Respirations, and Temperature
  - Blood Pressure
- Recognition of Pneumonia versus Common Cold
- Minor First Aid – Wounds, Burns
- Dehydration – Oral Rehydration Solution

Reciprocity

- Local midwife and her daughter taught us about their practice
- Learned local health beliefs and folk medicine
- Opportunity to practice Spanish language
- Learned about Guatemalan culture

Barriers

- Extremely low literacy levels
  - At least 2 participants had no formal schooling
  - Most could count to 100 – 150
- Different time orientation
  - Usually arrived 20 – 30 minutes late
  - Many women had never seen a watch
  - No woman owned a watch
- Extreme poverty
- Methods for overcoming barriers
  - KISS method
  - Lots of hands-on learning – return demonstrations
  - We provided equipment (bags, BP cuffs, watches, stethoscopes, bandages, etc)

LESSONS LEARNED

- Begin by establishing a relationship
  - Attend local church service
  - Talk with local leaders
  - Do home visits to assess the actual needs versus perceived needs
- Use simple terminology (about 3-4th grade level)
- Involve leaders from the community (local midwife and her daughter, pastor's wife, local school teacher)
- Emphasize the reciprocal nature of learning
- Be flexible, focus on the relationship rather than the task to be completed

Plans For The Future

- Seek funding to continue the *promotora* program
- Continue the fall trip and possibly add a spring or summer trip
- Establish a relationship with a local SON in Guatemala
- Continue to visit the hospital, add a visit to the local clinic in Pixabaj

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