



NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH
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Mr. Geoffrey Holland
ORBIS International
520 8th Avenue, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10018

Dear Mr. Holland:

I want to relate to you a story in which your organization made an important part in making a difference.

Last spring I had the opportunity to volunteer at a school in Guatemala called "Mi Refugio". I was assigned to help as a translator for team of nursing students and their instructors and we ran medical clinics at the school as well as some schools in neighboring villages.

At one school I met a teacher named Nancy. Nancy is 19 years old, just out of High School and teaches 45 elementary school students in school building with little more than desks and a blackboard. After getting an account, Nancy has been able to email me from her local internet café. I hadn't heard from Nancy in a while, but I got an email on recently explaining that she had injured her arm and could not write for a bit. She also said her classroom gets flooded when it rains, and in the night rats come in and eat all of the kid's important papers.

But she was really concerned about a student with a lesion on one of his eyes affecting his vision. The boy, Edgar, is one of her favorite students and is an orphan living with his grandparents. She asked if I could help somehow.

My heart sank because I feared this is retinoblastoma. How could I get her information she needed? Was there any way to treat the child, and even pay for transportation or medicines? That all seemed hopeless.

But, a search on the internet found a group in Guatemala City led by Dr. Barnoya that received training and equipment from St Jude's Hospital to perform this therapy. This project is funded by ORBIS. Nancy can only read email at the internet cafe, so I needed some way to get her a message. I have her cell phone number and I found a site that allowed me to send her a text message that this boy needs to see an eye doctor right away, and I sent her more info in an email. She got the message and retrieved my email!

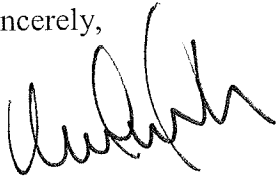
Meanwhile I searched for a way to reach Dr. Barnoya. I wrote to the head of international projects at St. Jude's, and this wonderful woman emailed my back in minutes with the email addresses of Dr. Barnoya and her colleague, who I contacted. Margarita Barnoya

emailed me information a clinic in San Juan, close to where the boy lives, and on Friday her residents are there every week seeing patients. She sent me her cell phone number. I texted that to Nancy who called her and arranged to take the boy there.

I am still in shock that this seemingly hopeless situation now had hope. After some delay Edgar did make it to the clinic. He turns out to have keratitis, an inflammation of the cornea, typically caused by a viral infection. With the aid of a topical anti-viral medication his vision is improving, but it was critical that he received attention right away.

Communication and information is power. Without the technology your organization is providing we never would have got Edgar the treatment he needed. I hope you will share this story with your employees and tell them how much I appreciate what they do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Dean". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

Michael Dean