

Mission Doctors Association strives to heed Christ's call to heal the sick

Antoinette Lullo | Jun 10, 2018



Juan and his mother with Dr. Antoinette Lullo. (Credit: Brian Medernach.)

Andrea told me that she woke up with a terrible headache. She had headaches in the past, but she knew this could be dangerous. Andrea was 31 weeks pregnant with her first baby and trusting her instincts, she traveled 4 hours by boat to Centro de Salude Santa Clotilde.

We are located in an isolated area on the Napo River in the far north Amazon region of rural Peru. This small hospital here delivers babies, treats injuries and illnesses, and reaches out to the many outstations that are a part of our work, and this extends to over 20,000 people up and down the river.

When she arrived, my husband and I, who are physicians serving with Mission Doctors Association here, assessed her condition and knew it was more than a mere headache. Her blood pressure was dangerously high, and this was putting her at risk for a stroke as well as putting her unborn son in danger.

We knew he needed to be born quickly to save his mother's life. Yet, we also knew that in this case, without a ventilator, a cesarean section in Santa Clotilde would be dangerous for a baby so young. We made the decision to transfer Andrea to Iquitos for delivery.



Little Juan. (Credit: Dr. Antoinette Lullo.)

Initially, both mother and baby Juan did well. The transfer saved their lives, but after over two weeks in the hospital, Juan had not gained a single ounce. Little Juan's life was at risk again.

We requested that they return to Santa Clotilde for support. With the diligent efforts of all of us here at Santa Clotilde, Juan gained weight every day. We fed Juan Andrea's expressed milk through a nasogastric tube and monitored his weight and development closely, we know this truly saved his life again.

After just two weeks, Juan was stronger and mature enough to nurse on his own. Since he had such a rocky start, Juan's mom, Andrea, continued to bring him in for weight and well-child checks. He is now chubby, happy and thriving. The family is ever grateful for their healthy baby boy!

On a recent short-term Mission back to Santa Clotilde, Antoinette visited Andrea and Juan, now a happy, active, soccer playing 5 year old.

Juan and Andrea's story is one of many thousands of men, women and children that MDA serves every year in the mission fields of Africa, Central America, and elsewhere, and we are able to do this work only because of support from our Catholic community at home.

Since 1959, Catholic doctors and their families from across the United States have served with Mission Doctors, following Christ's call to 'Heal the Sick'.

To learn more about Mission Doctors Association and its mission providing lifesaving medical care for the poor and training for local healthcare professionals around the world we invite you to visit <http://www.MissionDoctors.org>.

Lullo specializes in Family Practice having graduated from the Maternal Child Health Fellowship Program at the Parental Child Center (PCC), set up to provide care for under-served poor communities in Chicago. She received training in high risk obstetrics, surgical obstetrics, and newborn care. She remained at PCC as Co-Director of the Maternal Child Health Fellowship for 3 years. Dr. Lullo joined Hinsdale Family Residency as Core Faculty in 2016.