



## The “Barrow Beyond Borders” Effort Neurosurgical Volunteerism in Managua, Nicaragua

by Peter Nakaji, MD, Ravneet Kaur

**T**he Hospital Escuela Antonio Lenin Fonseca in Managua, Nicaragua, is an active FIENS site supporting a busy neurosurgery teaching program, which is the only neurosurgery residency program in the country. Nicaragua is the second poorest country in Latin America (after only Haiti). Barrow Neurological Institute (BNI) neurosurgeons have partnered with a number of individual neurosurgeons and FIENS to improve the education in neurosurgery and advance the care for patients at this site with a goal for increased self-sufficiency.

In January of 2012 an exploratory group from the Barrow Neurological Institute (BNI), including philanthropist Tom Bible representing the Bible Family Foundation, visited the neurosurgery training program there. Their goal was to establish a new regional training site in Nicaragua for residents from the Barrow and other North American programs and organize an educational exchange with the Nicaraguan residency program. We found a warm, welcoming, and very capable group of Nicaraguan neurosurgery residents and attendings. The teaching service, headed by Dr. Eduardo Caceres, is

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absolutely primed for advancement. A series of neurosurgery visits by Dr. Randall Porter, Dr. Curtis Dickman, BNI resident James Kalyvas, radiologist Tobias Schifter, and me shared both brain and spine surgery teaching with our Nicaraguan partners. We all found it to be both enjoyable and personally enlightening. These visits saw the introduction of a Spanish-language resident handbook, neurosurgery journal club, the pre-surgical pause, a new wide screen computer monitor for rounding, the donation of a substantial number of neurosurgical supplies, and advances in clinical care.

**“We welcome any neurosurgeons interested in visiting this vibrant teaching service”**

– Peter Nakaji, MD,  
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Importantly, these visits by us at the BNI were only part of the effort. I am delighted to report that in addition to our trips, Dr. Dennis McDonnell had a prolonged stay working with the service, and Dr. David Semenov led a group from Albany Medical College. We look forward to continuing to work in this collaborative way. We welcome any neurosurgeons interested in visiting this vibrant teaching service that is relatively easy to reach to contact FIENS.

The program in Nicaragua could benefit from additional new equipment, greater organization of the existing surgical equipment, improved access to up to date online neurosurgical literature, better tracking of patients and their outcomes, and an exchange program whereby a nominated resident in Nicaragua can do a 2-3 month visiting observational fellowship at BNI. Much of this is in process now.

With the support of new coordinator Ravneet Kaur, we are having regular organizational meetings, and the work is in progress for 5 year development plan. Ms. Kaur is responsible for completing all the paperwork for travel to Nicaragua, tracking expenses and reimbursements, and facilitating better communication between the residents of Nicaragua and BNI. We are very fortunate to have her.

More information on the Nicaragua site and our effort can be found on the Barrow Beyond Borders website [barrowbeyondborders.weebly.com](http://barrowbeyondborders.weebly.com)

