Objective

To understand the impact resource challenges have on healthcare delivery as seen in a resource-poor country such as Guatemala.

Health Resources

All materials, personnel, facilities, funds, and anything else that can be used for providing health care and services.

Why Guatemala?

- Guatemalans struggle with some of the worst health issues in Central America, and in some cases, the world

Poverty intricately tied to health care

- 4th highest rate of chronic malnutrition in the world
- Maternal mortality rate of 113 deaths/100,000 births (US – 16/100,000 births)
- 3rd worst childhood growth rate (Yemen and Bangladesh)
- High mortality rate - neonates and infants (22.7 deaths/1000 live births)
- Large prevalence of diabetes and heart disease

Civil War (1960 – 1996)

- 36 years of civil war destroyed health care system
- 200,000 killed, 83% were indigenous, surviving Mayans driven into rural highlands
- 1996 Peace Accord promised new health system but failed to deliver on it’s promise
  - Result, a complex, fractionated health care system (patchwork of different providers and facilities, both public and private) with 75% of population uninsured, the greatest percentage being the indigenous population

Corruption and Financing

- "La Linea" – government officials receiving bribes from business people to help them evade taxes (President and VP jailed) - 2016
- Result – lower tax revenue and less money for health care system
- Minister of Health – hospitals are in a “pathetic state” running largely on materials that patients are providing
- Government refused to increase health budget, resulting in health care workers and physicians not being paid
  - Only 0.9 doctor for every 1000 patients
  - Lack of specialists in rural areas (80% in Guatemala City)
  - Only 45 hospitals in country that should have 300 to serve population
  - 2015 – 4 hospitals closed to only emergency care due to budget cuts
Environment

- Guatemala is a very ruggedly beautiful country.
  - Volcanic Rift
  - Lake Atitlan
- Guatemala’s mountainous terrain makes it hard to grow crops for produce purposes, contributing to the people’s malnutrition.
- Corn maize is a food staple – high carb diets contribute to high rate of diabetes.
- Much of the land taken from indigenous people during civil war was never returned to owner, forcing population to work for lower wages at corporate farms.
- Some of the villages are very remote, making access to healthcare difficult.
- Water and sewage problems widespread
Language Barriers

- 22 indigenous languages spoken in Guatemala
- Many rural patients do not speak Spanish, while the medical staff speaks ONLY Spanish, making it difficult for patients to understand instructions about health care
Mayan Culture

• Mistrust of providers – often ridiculed for beliefs, treated as ignorant

• Strong beliefs in plant-based and spiritual medicine – natural healers

• As a result, often come to health facilities very late in course of disease

Religious beliefs

• Catholicism main religion of Guatemala (65%)

• Women often intimidated for using contraception – “only unfaithful women use contraception”

• Result, Guatemala has the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in Latin America, further perpetuating the cycle of poverty

Education

• Mandatory and free Primary School for ages 7-13
  – BUT, only 4/10 will complete primary school. Lowest primary school completion rate in Central America

• Optional and free Secondary School for 3-5 years

• College attendance is rare because most children must work to contribute to the family due to poor economics

Digital divide: gap between haves and have nots

One of the biggest global health challenges is access to information

Health problems seen in resource-poor countries

INFECTIOUS/COMMUNICABLE DISEASES PREVALENT:

- VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASES, e.g. measles
- ACUTE RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS (ARI)
- DIARRHEAL DISEASES (cholera)
- MALARIA
- TB
- HEPATITIS
- HIV/AIDS

Plus:

- MALNUTRITION RELATED CONDITIONS
  - CALORIE DEFICIENCIES
  - MICRO-NUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES
  - TRAUMA/ACCIDENTS

Many of these diseases are treatable

The importance of knowledge, learning, innovation, and IT

“The most fundamental resource in modern economy is knowledge and, accordingly, the most important process is learning”

"Andy"

Carried 3 hours down the mountain, took chicken bus 6 hours to go to Retalhuleu for care for his spasticity.

Thanks!!!