The Joys and Sorrows of Working in Ciudad Juarez
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Learning Objectives
- Learn the advantages and disadvantages of working outside of a formal organization in a difficult area
- How Improving ties between Sister cities on the Border can improve the health of Texans

Disclosure
- Alan Ira Ross, MD, PhD has no relationships with commercial companies to disclose.

History
- Invitation to El Paso to speak about following patients across borders and to read stories about those who transcended barbarity in Kosova
- Reception and told: “don’t look at the bridge and think that we can follow patients who cross back and forth
- In the old days of the Friendship Marathon it was possible, but now there is nothing but beheadings and blackmail

The Tarahumara Indians
The “Angel Of Juarez”

- Guadalupe de la Vega who has heard the lectures and readings insists I get in her car and see another Juarez
- FEMAP in Juarez: El Hospital de la Familia for Vulnerable Women and Children, the Nursing School and After School Programs for primary and secondary school pupils
- The children needed us and those who looked after them needed us too
- Juarez was isolated and everyone felt abandoned

The Origins of Decay of Family and Community

- Poverty: Agriculture to Manufacturing in 20 years where food is costly and pay is poor
- Women preferred workers changes family roles
- Alcohol and poverty lead to violence in the home
- Victims of violence pass it on in school
- Decrease in school attendance
- NINIs and the new companionship of gangs
- Who can you trust???

Origins of Decay

- Failure to integrate newcomers from Central Mexico
- Lack of good schools and hospitals in the provinces
- Poor transportation
- Lack of psychological help for children
- Mexico City tries out PTSD treatments in Juarez
- Police corruption and no one feels safe
- Innocents are offered the homes of those who have left the city and become victims of violence
- From drugs for export to drugs for consumption

Looking for those who would not allow the violence to consume them

- FEMAP prizes loyalty and I worked under their protection
- Guadalupe, the Angel of Juarez was ‘everywhere at once’
- Others:
  - The Art Therapist and her sister
  - The nuns from Las Hormigas
  - The agronomist who taught the poor to grow their own food
  - The poetess who taught the prisoners to write poetry
  - The ex-Priest and his wife who created a center for the neurologically devastated called “Los Ojos de Dios”
  - The electrical engineer who taught middle school kids robotics
  - The soccer playing priest and his boss, a lover of opera and marathons
  - The factory director and librarian

Mescales: Dancing in the Streets

Guadalupe cannot wait...

- She wants doctors from New York
- Would they be able to persuade Texans to cross the border?
- And more New Yorkers to invent new and better after school programs
- Could the children learn how to evaluate their own programs? Learn statistics? Become the first participants in Citizen Science?
Impediments to bringing people to Juarez

- Fear of Juarez (I was frightened myself)
- The Texans in a legal bind: the State Department directive put Juarez off-limits while USAID encourages people to come!
- Private doctors who might be willing to take the risk are overwhelmed by their own patients
- Guadalupe guarantees their safety. God is good
- And eventually “the prayers of all Mexico are answered”

The Start of a Collaboration

- The arrival of doctors from New York, medical students, nurses and public health students from Columbia University
- Lecturers for a conference across borders and
- The Fiasco of Lecturers for Los Ojos de Dios
- Arrival of Israelis from Ben Gurion University

Modesto the Giraffe in Juarez

Maker Spaces

- Training children and adults to make electronic circuits, code, do 3D printing and learn the fundamentals of robotics
- Some in the FABLAB in El Paso
- A Juarez version of the HUB is scheduled to open in the Fall
- Will in “Kid to Code” a private enterprise reaching out to poor children with 3D printing
- The Punto Mejico Conectado established by the Mexican government teaches all above including robotics
- The model is the Maker Space in Djakova, Kosovo which is the best in the Balkans
- The inventions of Juarez children will become part of the open source network which reaches makers in all the world

After School Programs

Citizen Science

- Crowd Sourcing teaches non-professionals to become partners in advanced research
- Example is the game FOLDIT which found the configuration of the protease in the HIV virus which makes it grow
- Urban Birds is a Cornell University Ornithology project which teaches children how to recognize and track birds
- Galaxy Zoo teaches how to interpret images that help astronomers classify new galaxies
- These and other project will give Juarez children the opportunity to know children around the world
- Google: sci.starter
In Juarez children learned last year how to identify DNA breaks after staining microscopic slides of amniotic fluid from workers exposed to toxic chemicals. This year we will teach children how to determine the effects of dirty steams on the organs of fish caught in the Rio Bravo by comparing them to those from fish grown in fish farms. We plan to examine the water that the poor in Anapara drink by using a portable PCR analyzer and microscope, organized by a local pediatrician and findings to be presented to the Mayor and Governor.

The most famous poet in Juarez will do for the children what she did for the prisoners some years ago, namely teach them how to write poetry and keep diaries of everyday life. These poems and diaries will be supplemented by photos of family, friends and community and the children will discuss them with psychologists and sociologists.

Plans to involve sister cities locally and around the world in these projects and expand the scope of the work: Djacoba, Kosova and Juarez, Mexico. Virtual spaces are only just beginning with instant communication that will improve the lives of the children of Juarez. Many ideas are in the making...
The Draw of the West