



2026 Dharampur India

TRIP REPORT

OUR STORY

Dharampur, India January 18-23, 2026

Operation Medical's first visit to Dharampur was in January of 2024, and we were delighted to return in 2026 with a team of eighteen volunteers to provide surgical care in the areas of ENT, General, Gynecology, and Plastics. The 2026 mission took place from January 18th to 23rd, and it was great to be back working together with our friends at Shrimad Rajchandra Hospital.

The travel to Dharampur was not without challenges for many of our mission volunteers who traveled from Alabama, Colorado, New Hampshire,

New York, Pennsylvania, and Gujarat, India. From cancelled flights, delayed flights, customs issues, and then an 18-wheeler crash on the highway between Mumbai and Dharampur (catching a handful of folks in an additional 3-hour transfer delay during an already harrowing 4-hour road trip), it was no small miracle that everyone arrived safely and ready to get to work.

On arrival in Dharampur, everyone was welcomed by Vinod Hemnani, our local coordinator, and shown to their temporary "home away from home" at the Shrimad Rajchandra Ashram, where we had time to unpack and get a bite to eat for breakfast.

continued on page 2

THE PLACE:

Dharampur, nestled in the Valsad district of Gujarat and often referred to as the Kashmir of Gujarat, boasts a rich history dating back to the 13th century. Besides its scenic beauty and historical significance, Dharampur offers a unique cultural experience. The local markets bustle with traditional crafts and the air is often filled with the sounds of vibrant festivals. Of special interest in Dharampur is the Shrimad Rajchandra Ashram, a 223-acre complex that is a center for spirituality, meditation, and yoga. It is a major destination for members of Jainism, an ancient Indian religion emphasizing nonviolence (ahimsa), spiritual purity, and liberation (moksha) through ethical living and self-discipline.

Adjacent to the Ashram is the Shrimad Rajchandra Hospital & Research Center, where the 2026 Operation Medical Mission Camp was conducted. This 250-bed charitable institute is a state-of-the-art, modern health care facility. The hospital maintains its mission to provide high-quality healthcare free of cost or at highly subsidized rates to the underprivileged tribal communities of South Gujarat.



OUR STORY:

continued from page 1

Part of the team made their way to the hospital and set up the storage room with the supplies transported in bags by all the volunteers. Our surgeons made their rounds, screening those patients scheduled for Sunday procedures.

Our hosts provided a sumptuous lunch and a tour of the newly opened Raj Uphaar, which is a holistic initiative and center designed to empower rural women in South Gujarat through skill development, employment, and the production of a wide range of food products. Part of the 'Women's Care' program, it focuses on socio-economic empowerment through the creation of high-quality, authentic products.

Early in the evening we enjoyed a brief tour of the Shrimad Rajchandra Ashram grounds and attended an Aarti Ceremony at the Shri Dharampur Tirth Temple that is intricately constructed and carved of the finest white marble in the world. The Aarti Ceremony is a significant Hindu/Jain ritual that involves offering light to deities, symbolizing devotion, gratitude, and the removal of darkness and ignorance.

We enjoyed another great meal of local dishes at the hospital and after an exceptionally long day, it was time for some overdue sleep for everyone!



Surgeries commenced early Sunday morning and continued through Friday mid-day. The week was filled with collaboration between our volunteers and the local staff with each group teaching and learning while the patients received the highest quality of care. We are pleased to report that 106 successful procedures were conducted during the mission, a handful of which were complex and taking up to 6 hours to complete.

As the camp ended, there were hugs, tears and a ton of photos and Facebook tags with our team and the local staff. This mission will be a fond memory for years to come. Last but not least, as always, we were grateful for the opportunity to provide high quality care to those individuals who do not have adequate access to medical care.



**PATIENT STORY - SUMDARIBEN, PELVIC RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY
DR. JEFF SEGIL**

Sumdariben is a 56-year-old mother of four who has been married for 41 years to her husband, Ramjubhai Ganga, who farms rice and raises chickens. They live together in a small home with one bathroom, along with their four children and nine grandchildren.



Sumdariben has been living with uterine prolapse for about 5 years, making everyday life incredibly challenging. She heard about our surgery camp and endured a two-hour motorcycle ride from her home to Dharampur in the hopes of receiving treatment.

Sumdariben was evaluated and consented to pelvic reconstructive surgery. Pelvic organs, including the uterus and vagina, can herniate and fall out of the pelvis (prolapse), making for significant discomfort and inability to perform daily functions, including manual labor. Many of the patients we see live in rural areas and are frequently subsistence farmers, performing manual labor 6-7 days per week. Needless to say, this type of hernia affects the ability to complete daily activities.



Pelvic reconstruction enables the hernia to be reduced (organs to be placed back in the abdominal cavity where they belong) and for the patient to return to normal daily activities.

This diagnosis of “something falling out” was our most common complaint in Gynecology during this mission and one we were not only able to address, but also instruct the local GYNs in how to perform this surgery. Dr. Segil shared that it is important to share not only how to complete repairs, but also leave local surgeons with a new skill set, which is one of the most meaningful parts of our work.



**PATIENT STORY - MURSHID, SPLENECTOMY
DR. KYLE PACKER**

Murshid lives in Daman, which is about 60 km from Dharampur, and at 22 years old, is the eldest brother to two younger siblings. About three years ago, he began feeling sick and weak, and his symptoms progressed over time. He was hardly able to eat and often had severe pain.

Murshid had been working in the family business, selling tires, but had to stop working and attending school in the 10th grade due to being too sick to do either activity. The family sought medical help, and he had an inconclusive endoscopy with anesthesia and then a second one without any anesthesia. He felt completely traumatized and scared. His blood counts were so low that he required transfusion several weeks ago.

He heard about the surgery camp and made the two-hour motorcycle ride to the hospital, hoping for help that would enable him to return to work and have a normal life.



Upon examination, it was determined that his spleen was significantly enlarged. The normal spleen is about the size of the palm of one’s hand. Murshid’s spleen was huge... more like a football. Because his spleen was more blood-filled than normal, any direct impact or injury to the spleen could have caused it to burst; which is a life-threatening injury.

Dr. Packer diagnosed Murshid with immune thrombocytopenia (ITP), a rare disease that causes the immune system to produce fewer platelets and mistakes the platelets for foreign substances and destroys them. This is a serious problem because the main role of platelets is to prevent and stop bleeding in the body. People with ITP need to avoid activities where

continued on page 4

**PATIENT STORY - MURSHID, SPLEENECTOMY
DR. KYLE PACKER**

continued from page 3



they might get hurt and bleed. They may need to take certain drugs for the rest of their life and avoid others. Most people with ITP live for decades after their diagnosis.

After the surgery, his mother, Renata, cried as she exclaimed, "I do not know what would have happened if you had not come to this surgical camp. We thought our son was dying."

Murshid is expected to make a full recovery and will need to be monitored for his ITP.



**PATIENT STORY - RUBINA, BURN SCAR CONTRACTURE RELEASE
DR. KENNETH ARTHUR & DR. MICHAEL LANNI**

Rubina is a 34-year-old mother of three who suffered burns in a cooking fire 14 years ago when her scarf caught fire and engulfed her left arm, chest, and neck in flames. The healing resulted in severe contracture of her left arm past the elbow, with her forearm adhering to her side and breast. She is unable to perform any lateral motion or extend her arm and must wear a garment that slips over her head like a cape, as sleeved garments are impossible. Her husband must manage the household chores.

Rubina and her family live amongst the poorest of the poor in a small structure within the Muslim community. Her children are schooled at the mosque; however, they do not have the time or energy for any outside activities. The family barely survives and struggles to obtain enough food for each day.

Rubina learned of the surgical mission through Dr. Shivan and came to see if there was anything Operation Medical could do to help her regain mobility.

Dr. Arthur and Dr. Lanni performed a complicated burn contracture procedure involving the shoulder and elbow, requiring a special muscle flap (latissimus dorsi pedicle flap) and extensive skin grafting (taken from her thighs), taking them seven hours to complete, even while working together. They were able to release the forearm from her torso so that her shoulder could go to 90 degrees now, but due to the tightness in her biceps muscle, full release of the elbow was not possible. However, the elbow position, along with the new mobility of the shoulder, should benefit her greatly.

On rounds the next morning, Rubina was in good spirits and was not experiencing the pain intensity as expected. She required a special foam pad brace that Dr. Lanni produced in a true "MacGyver" moment that we sometimes experience in these third-world settings, which helps hold her arm away from her body while the grafts heal. We anticipate that she will remain in the hospital for about a week and, hopefully, will have the opportunity for physical therapy at some point in the future.



PATIENT STORY - ARUNA, THYROIDECTOMY
DR. MARY THERESA LEWIS



During the course of the week, our team had the pleasure of meeting Aruna, a 72-year-old female, who lives alone after her husband passed away eight years ago. She has four daughters and six grandchildren. About a year ago, she noticed a lump on her throat that has increased in size over the last 12 months.

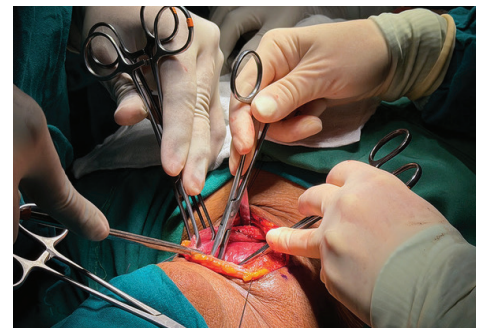
She began having compressive symptoms, including difficulty swallowing and breathing while lying flat at night. Her daughter, who lives in Dharampur, heard about the

Operation Medical Surgical camp and brought her mother to be examined. A CT scan confirmed a large thyroid goiter that extended into her upper chest.

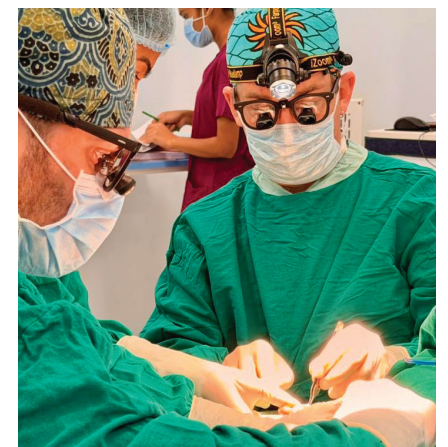


Dr. Mary Theresa Lewis performed a total thyroidectomy, and the patient was in great spirits the next day. She was so grateful that she kissed Dr. Lewis during post-op rounds, and her daughter, who lives in Dharampur, invited Dr. Lewis to visit her home.

Aruna will recover nicely and will stay with her daughters until she is ready to return home.



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VOLUNTEER REFLECTIONS:

Dr. Michael Lanni, *Plastic Surgeon*

My interest in global health volunteering began many years ago after hearing my father's medical mission stories from his service as an anesthesiologist in Haiti. I always hoped to follow his example of service, and Operation Medical provided the opportunity to do so within a thoughtful and collaborative organization committed to patient-centered care.

Even before arriving in India, the process of preparing for this mission was meaningful. Navigating the visa process was at times challenging and uncertain, but it became a humbling and quietly encouraging reminder of how much coordination and persistence are required long before patient care ever begins. It reinforced how much unseen work goes into making these missions possible.

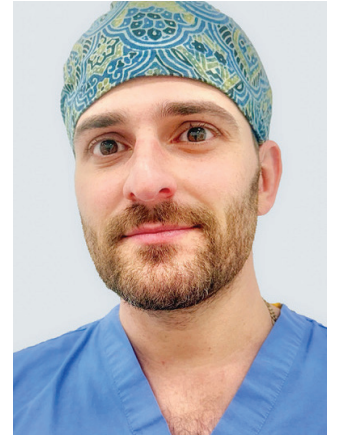
What stood out to me most during the mission was the warmth and kindness of the people we encountered everywhere we went. The patients were incredibly grateful and trusting. Even with the language barrier, the sentiment was unmistakable. Their resilience and openness were deeply humbling.

The hospital staff and local medical teams were equally impressive. Their dedication to providing the best possible care and supporting the mission was evident in every interaction. The academic curiosity of the residents and physicians was equally impressive. Their thoughtful questions, engagement, and eagerness to participate were inspiring and genuinely motivating. Working alongside them made me want to be a better surgeon.

I was also struck by the variety and complexity of our surgical cases. Practicing in a different healthcare system challenged me to rely on fundamental principles and close teamwork. This experience reinforced that high quality care is not defined by technology alone, but by judgment, adaptability, and collaboration.

Outside the hospital, our hosts demonstrated extraordinary care and generosity. We were welcomed into the surrounding culture with openness and sincerity. Nothing about the experience felt transactional. There was no exchange of currency, only an exchange of gratitude, values, and shared humanity.

Life at the Ashram was deeply grounding and offered perspective beyond the clinical work. While this experience felt once in a lifetime, I am hopeful it will be the first of many opportunities to serve with Operation Medical in the future.

**Tiffany Nell, RN**

Thank you for allowing me to participate in this trip. What an adventure! We had so much fun. Being that this was my first mission, I was surprised at how everyone worked so well together. It was like we all worked together before.

The Ashram was a beautiful place to stay. The temple is gorgeous, especially at night. The people are lovely. The breakfast was amazing. I highly recommend the sound bath. It is so relaxing and grounding. It was a great way to end the day before bed. Meeting the Enlightened One was quite an experience. He seemed very grateful for us giving time to the hospital to help the people of the communities.

The hospital is a beautiful facility. The employees were awesome to work with. Everyone was eager to learn from each other. The language barrier was a hurdle, but somehow speaking 'surgery' ended up being a common language. The GI ladies I got to work with in the GYN room were lovely. We learned a lot from each other. We genuinely had a great time.

I looked forward to each day going in and spending the day together. You could tell they loved what they do for a living. I appreciated their time and dedication. Those ladies gave a lot of themselves that week. Their extra time and work did not go unnoticed. It was a sad day Friday when we needed to leave.

This trip to India will definitely be something I won't forget. Everyone we interacted with was so gracious. The teams blended so well together. We worked hard and played hard!! The theme of the week was adventure and what an adventure it was! Thank you again for this opportunity. Hopefully, more adventures are yet to come.



TOTAL TREATED PATIENTS:

106

CASES BY GENDER:

Female – 63

Male - 43

CASES BY AGE:

Youngest – 1 year old

Oldest – 75 years old

CASES BY TYPE:

Amputation Below Knee
 Burn Scar Contracture w/ Lat Dorsi
 Pedicle Flap & Skin Grafting
 Cholecystectomy / Laparoscopic
 Colpocleisis
 Colpocleisis Le Fort Procedure
 Complex burn scar release w/ skin graft
 Complex Syndactyly Release x 4
 w/ Skin Grafting
 Contracture Release with Z-Plasty
 C-Section
 Cystocele / Rectocele Repair
 D&C (with polypectomy and/or biopsy)
 Excision Cyst / Mass / Scar,
 Debridement & Reconstruction
 Excision Fibroadema
 Excision Keloid
 Hemorrhoidectomy
 Hernia Repair
 Hydrocele Repair
 Hysterectomy / Abdominal
 Hysterectomy / Vaginal
 Laparoscopic Ovarian Cystectomy
 Lumpectomy, Breast
 Myomectomy
 Parotidectomy
 Pilonidal Cystectomy
 Release / Revision Scar Contracture
 Release Burn Scar Contracture
 (with and without skin graft)
 Proximal interphalangeal joint (PIP)
 contracture release
 Septoplasty
 Splenectomy
 Syndactyly Release
 Thyroidectomy
 Tonsillectomy / Adenoidectomy
 Trigger Finger Release

**Trip Leader****Mukul Parikh, MD**

Our experience during our first mission to SRM hospital in 2024 was outstanding and I did not think it could possibly be better. Our return visit in January 2026 proved me wrong in many ways. The number of varied case types lined up for us, the availability of four operating rooms, state-of-the-art equipment and abundant supplies at hand were all par excellence!

The complexity and length of numerous cases resulted in a total of 106 cases being completed. Many patients received life-changing care which may not have otherwise been made available to them. Operation Medical's team

of 18 volunteers gelled immediately, and everyone worked at the top of their level.

We were grateful for the hospitality extended to our team. The local hosts kindly provided several afterhours activities such as attending an Aarti Ceremony at the Shri Dharampur Tirthe Temple, participating in sound bath meditation and aerial yoga. These experiences were enriching to our bodies and minds.

We look forward to returning here or to their sister hospital in Surendranagar next year.

A SPECIAL NOTE OF THANKS TO

- Dr. Sohini Sheth for being the liaison during the planning phase and being the coordinator (along with Dr. Nishith) during the camp.
- Dr. Anmol for coordinating our medical licensing process in India, plus getting the case lists prepared for the camp.
- Vinod Hemnani and Devang Gada for coordinating logistics of transportation, accommodation and everything else we needed during the week.
- Mr. Abhay and Mrudula Jasani for the special dinner at his beautiful home.

THE TEAM**Team Members****Surgeons**

Dr. Kenneth Arthur
 Dr. Michael Lanni
 Dr. Mary Theresa Lewis
 Dr. Kyle Packer
 Dr. Jeff Segil

Anesthesia:

Dr. Sanjib Adhikary
 Dr. Adam Graub
 Dr. Mukul Parikh
 (Trip Leader)
 Dr. Neelima Parikh
 Dr. Ben Segil

Nurses/Surgical Techs:

Karmae Amsbaugh
 Tiffany Nell
 Christine Otto
 Bhakti Pillai

Support

Cheryl Arthur
 Margaret Marchaterre
 Charvi Patel
 Raahi Shah



2026
Dharampur
India

Operation Medical is thankful for all of the participants and welcomes them to join us for another camp. Please check our website at www.operationmedical.org to see how you can get involved in providing global healthcare.