

CURE visits in Belize, by Dr. Ed Holroyd

Project C.U.R.E. (www.projectcure.org) has been serving health facilities in the Central American country of Belize for several years, shipping the usual 40-foot containers packed tightly with medical equipment and supplies. There was another CURE Clinic planned for late December 2019 to the La Loma Luz Hospital in Santa Elena in western Belize, but that got postponed. However, it attracted my initial interest in another trip to Belize.

My wife, Gail, and I had visited Belize 12 years ago for a week and liked exploring coastal, central, and western habitats. 21 December this year is the 50th anniversary of our wedding, and that makes a good excuse for a visit to a nice place. We chose to visit Belize 10 to 19 December and do a similar exploration of this small country. In late November another container was loaded at the Denver (Centennial) warehouse and sent to Belize, apparently arriving on 4 December and separated among 3 recipients. Boxes that I had handled and marked would be among the contents. It would be nice to visit one or more CURE recipients and see those boxes of supplies again in their final destinations.

During our second week in Belize our route would pass by the La Loma Luz Hospital, enabling a visit there. The Polyclinic II on the northeastern island at San Pedro and the related clinic on the nearby Caye Caulker island are two of the recipients of our latest container shipment. Our hotel, the airport terminal, and the Polyclinic II at San Pedro were all within a few blocks walking distance from each other. We had stayed at Caye Caulker in 2007 and could have taken a short boat ride there from San Pedro if appropriate. As it turned out, we did not visit the clinic on Caye Caulker, but the commuter airplane made a brief stop there on our final day as we returned to the international airport near Belize City.

I tried to contact the facilities in Belize by email and by Facebook, explaining my intended visits. The contact person, Cruz Chavez, for the container shipment was very busy and wrote to me only once. The Hospital and Polyclinic did not respond and showed no knowledge of my attempted communications when I arrived there. So I wore both the red CURE Clinic pouch from my earlier trip to Ivory Coast and my usual orange name tag to introduce myself.



The La Loma Luz Hospital is near the middle of Santa Elena, up a hill about a block from the main highway. It has a fairly large facility and is operated by the Seventh Day Adventist Church.



left side

right side

lobby welcome, check-in

Eventually the person with the key to the storage building arrived to take us out back. A previous CURE Clinic group built the set of wooden shelves for the boxes of supplies. The shelving units were numbered 1 to 10. The general contents were identified by labels on the shelf edges, though not readable at this camera resolution.



other boxes



unit 1



unit 2



unit 3



unit 4



units 5 and 6



unit 7



unit 8



unit 9



unit 10



Product Code labels with my black smudge mark in upper left corner

In the Denver warehouse, when I prepare pallets of boxes for higher temporary storage, I scan the bar code and make a black or blue smudge mark on the upper left corner of the Product Code labels. It is good to see my mark in other countries identifying which boxes I have personally lifted onto a pallet.

The boxes are oriented with our Product Code labels visible. Such organization in these shelve units makes it relatively easy to find what is needed, and what needs future replacement. Other recipients should do this.



As the load to Belize was being prepared, I made this collection of destination stickers. Items with the red sticker were to go to the BERT mobile clinic, and apparently that was accomplished successfully in Belize. Items with the orange sticker were to go to the larger Polyclinic II in San Pedro (which Gail and I visited). Items with the blue sticker were to go to the smaller clinic in Caye Caulker. Such instructions were included in the official documentation with the container shipment. As backup, I sent this image and explanation to Cruz Chavez and in my attempts to communicate with the San Pedro clinic. I had previously seen in West Africa a shipment that was not properly separated among the intended recipients. I had also seen in two West African countries rooms in

which boxes of supplies were randomly piled, making it extremely difficult to find needed supplies. So I advised organizing the boxes according to the numerical order of the Product Codes. For the Belize trip I brought with me copies of the 4 pages of code number identifications from our sorting center in the warehouse.

Gail and I arrived in San Pedro Tuesday afternoon, 17 December, and visited the Polyclinic II. I photographed shipment items in the lobby and saw one orange sticker and only blue stickers on everything else. There was no contact person present to show us the storage room. He was in Caye Caulker working on the shipment items there. We were advised to return Wednesday morning, which we did. Then after waiting more than an hour we were able to meet the administration person, though I forgot to record his name. He was a government worker rather than a clinic employee, and very eager to sort out the shipment details.



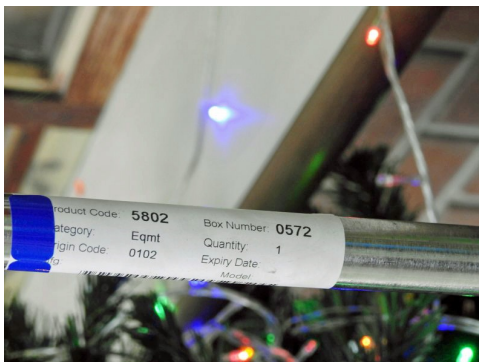
Product Code 6800 - scale



Code 6905 - exam table



Code 6905 - exam table



Code 5802 - IV stand



Code 3110 - monitor

These photos are of items in the lobby. While waiting we thought that most were waiting for a boat going to Caye Caulker, as the blue stickers indicated. As it turned out, someone on the mainland directing the sorting of items in the container was not following directions. The large shipment of items with the orange stickers was mistakenly sent to Caye Caulker and the smaller set

of blue sticker items was delivered to San Pedro. The contact person had been puzzled that the volume of items did not match the size of the clinics in San Pedro and Caye Caulker. When I showed him the instructions, it then made sense to him. He then needed to figure out how many items needed to be exchanged.



boxes with my mark and blue stickers

These are overlapping photos of boxes piled in an upper room of the Polyclinic II building. They are not yet organized by Product Code number. All have blue stickers, meaning that they should have gone to Caye Caulker, not to San Pedro. In the photo to the right is our contact person, going over my instruction sheets.

He realized that he did not need to exchange everything between the two islands. If boxes had the same Product Code, all that is necessary is to get the expected number of those boxes to their proper location, regardless of the orange or blue stickers. Similarly for the equipment items.

Once the distribution errors are corrected, then the boxes need to be organized by sequential Product Code numbers and stacked, like at the La Loma Luz Hospital, with Product Code bar code labels visible. Additional signs can be placed on the storage racks for ease in finding whatever supplies are needed.

Already better ideas for shipments to multiple destinations are arising. Instructions to the container unpackers can be placed at multiple places within the containers. That would provide backup in case the shipment administrators fail to pass on those instructions.

In addition, there should be instructions to the shipment recipients at the clinics and hospitals to organize the supply boxes in clearly labeled stacks according to the numerical order of the Product Code numbers on the box labels. This was done correctly at the La Loma Luz Hospital.

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