



Care Across The Globe with Dr. Cynthia Gomez

■ Dr. Cynthia Gomez was born in the Philippines and attended the University of the Philippines. She later moved to the US to complete her Doctor's Degree in Dental Medicine and Dental Surgery in addition to a masters in Oral Biology at Boston University and NYU.

■ Dr. Gomez works at a dental practice in Lower Manhattan. She has worked primarily with Global Dental Relief and Flying Doctors of America to provide free dental care to those most in need. In addition to her work overseas, Dr. Gomez has been dying to do some service work in cities in the US.

■ In addition to Flying Doctors and Global Dental Relief, Dr. Gomez also has worked with the Dental Volunteers of Israel.

■ On a typical mission trip, the day before patients are treated involves setting up the clinic, organizing the supplies, and preparing for the next day. Whether supplies are already at the location varies depending upon the location. When traveling with Global Dental Relief, Dr. Gomez and the other physicians brought all of their own supplies. How many patients they treat varies too. In Nepal, the team had cared for 700 children in only 5 days.

■ While speaking about her experiences, I asked Dr. Gomez what one of the hardest parts of her work is. She mentioned that it was seeing how cruel people can be. We spoke about her experiences seeing the Tutsi women that had lost everything during the Rwandan genocide. They had been brutalized, raped, murdered, and their families killed. Seeing the effects of such cruelty towards these women especially was a traumatic experience.

■ Recalling her visit to Jordan, Dr. Gomez and I chatted about how different the availability of medicine and care is across the world. She told me a story about a woman who had created her own clinic with a truck. She had been injured in the conflict. While fixing a broken hip in the US would cost thousands, the cost was only 500 dollars in Jordan. However, like many people around her the woman was impoverished and the cost was unimaginable. When Dr. Gomez said how much it would cost to fix, like her, I was initially shocked. We both thought it was so low. On her trip, Dr. Gomez eventually paid for the woman's surgery.

■ On a mission in Peru, Dr. Gomez recalled a funny story... "There was a young boy we had been treating. We were concerned because he had these bruises all along the sides of his body. We wanted to make sure he was okay and not of course that everything was safe at home. On other trips, sadly, we would see incidents of abuse across women and children so it wasn't an unlikely possibility that this could be the case. But when we asked him about the bruises and he told us why they were there, we all started giggling with a bit of relief. The boy said his llama had simply kicked him down the mountain."

■ In Nepal, Dr. Gomez and the team have worked regularly with an orphanage. When talking about her time there, Dr. Gomez mentions that one of the most special things about working with the orphanage are the people and the connections you are able to make by visiting multiple times. On their mission trip, the children are able to get involved with the clinic helping out. On one of those trips a young girl named Sihar was able to meet Dr. Gomez. A bond was formed between them as Sihar helped out at the clinic over the years. She eventually found her own passion for medicine as she completed her schooling and is a practicing Dentist.

■ Once on a visit to where Sihar lived with 60 other young orphan women, Dr. Gomez recalled the moment where Sihar revealed to her a small chest and as she was opening it and "my whole life is in this chest". Inside the chest was everything that Dr. Gomez had ever given to Sihar when she had volunteered in the clinics.

■ When asked if she had any children, Dr. Gomez mentioned a very special girl named Prem. In Cambodia, Dr. Gomez helped sponsor a family in great need. The mother had a few children, with the youngest boy having special needs. While supporting the family, she was even able to set up a children's soup for the younger boys. However, due to some family issues an intervention needed to occur to discuss how Dr. Gomez could support the children. After this meeting, Dr. Gomez was able to sponsor the young girl named Prem. Currently, she is happily attending a boarding school where she enjoys life and is studying hard.

■ With an end of the Coronavirus pandemic hopefully coming soon, Dr. Gomez would like to resume her overseas service. In the meantime though, she continues her volunteer work at home with "New York Cares" offering food delivery to those in need.

