

The Boletín

**Medicos en Accion
Guatemala Surgical Teams**



Summer 2020

Guatemala is a country characterized by low public investment, lack of adequate health infrastructure, and large gaps in access to basic systems, including health care. The country has responded to the pandemic by suspending public transportation, restricting travel from district to district, closing schools, mandated the wearing of non-medical masks and implemented curfews of varying lengths. As of July 24, the situation in the country was reported as 45,309 confirmed cases and increasing daily.

Sources:

<https://www.coronatracker.com/country/guatemala/> and
<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/guatemala/>

Our larger volunteer team works at Hermano Pedro Hospital, a major service of the Association Obras Sociales del Santo Hermano Pedro. The hospital also supports a residential program for babies with severe weight problems and operates the Virgen del Socorro facility. It provides permanent care for children and adults with severe physical and mental disabilities. In addition, Obras Sociales operates a daycare centre for children of single, working mothers (mostly from the Municipal Market), a seniors care home, and a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program for men.
<http://www.obrashermanopedro.org/>

Visiting teams and foreign volunteers are the Obras Sociales organization's lifeline of financial support for the surgical program and other services. All teams have cancelled for 2020 and the timeline for when volunteer teams can return to Guatemala is unknown.

Under these circumstances, 40% of the staff has been laid off and as Guatemala does not have employment insurance programs, the extended families that were supported by their relative's employment with the Obras Sociales organization are facing very difficult times. We will continue to monitor the situation in Guatemala and identify how we may be able to support the organization from afar.



In recent years, a smaller Medicos en Accion team has provided Ear, Nose & Throat clinics and surgeries as well as a hearing clinic at Hospital Shalom, a not-for-profit missionary hospital located in San Benito, Petén, Guatemala.
<https://newcovenantworldmissions.org/>

(Most of) the team arrived in Guatemala in March just before the country's borders were closed to non-residents. Our anesthesiologist and hearing clinic coordinator were forced to abandon travel to Guatemala after several flight changes and days of delays leaving Canada. Working with a local anesthesiologist and hearing technician, the small (and vital!) team on the ground was still able to conduct ENT clinics, perform some surgeries, assess hearing, and fit hearing aids. After several challenges travelling from the Peten to Guatemala City, our four team members were only able to leave Guatemala after securing seats on a flight that was organized by the U.S. government.

We continue to monitor the situation and identify criteria for determining when it will be safe for our teams to return to our work in Guatemala. We will keep you informed as the situation evolves.

Medicos-en-Accion Canada

Medicos-en-Accion
450 Greenstone Drive
Kamloops, British Columbia
V2C 1N9

Medicos-en-Accion/Guatemala
1431 Frontier Place
Nanaimo, BC V9X 1P5

Medicos-en-Accion/Guatemala Surgical Teams

Vice President: Brenda Uhrynuk
Team Leader Surgery : Jennifer Soucie, Norm Weir
Secretary: Cindy Reimer
Communications: David Hill-Turner
Volunteer Orientation: Joanne Marceau

Email: medicoscanada@gmail.com
FB: Medicos-en-Accion Guatemala Surgical Team
URL: www.medicos-en-accion.com

Medicos-en-Accion Board

President: Koos Meijerhof
Vice President/Team Leader The Gambia: Gareth Eeson
Vice President Surgery Guatemala: Brenda Uhrynuk
Vice President /Team Leader Medicine Guatemala: Brian Poelzer
Treasurer: Dennis Wallis
Secretary: Bill Beaton
Website: Blake Farren

Medicos-en-Accion is a registered charity in Canada.