

CHS News

Carolinas HealthCare System Launches International Medical Communication Portal

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Sanger Heart & Vascular Institute and the Guatemalan Institute of Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery establish a 24/7 communication bridge for diagnosis, treatment

Carolinas HealthCare System (CHS) and the Heineman Foundation of Charlotte (Heineman) have established a medical communication portal between Sanger Heart & Vascular Institute (SHVI) and the Guatemalan Institute of Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery (Unidad de Cirugía Cardiovascular; UNICAR). The portal is the first of its kind for the public hospital system in Guatemala and represents a major advancement in the quality of cardiac care overseas.

“We feel proud and privileged to support our colleagues in Central America and to help them improve and expand their cardiac program through this portal,” said Michael Tarwater, Chief Executive Officer for Carolinas HealthCare System. “The enduring partnership between Sanger Heart & Vascular Institute and UNICAR is defined by commitment to patient care and to healthcare innovation, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration.”

Last year, CHS donated a PAC System (Picture Archiving and Communication System) to UNICAR with the intent to enhance and modernize its technology. The portal will enable UNICAR cardiologists to consult with SHVI cardiologists in real-time on complex cardiac diagnostic problems, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and to recommend treatment plans for different clinical conditions. CHS facilities use a similar technology, allowing physicians throughout the System to collectively care for patients.

The communication bridge also allows cardiologists and surgeons, as well as mid-level providers and nurses, from both countries to participate in medical conferences and other educational opportunities taking place overseas. Such collaboration can serve as a catalyst in providing world class care to CHS patients, as well as patients around the world.

The equipment was installed with financial support from the Dickson Foundation and from Heineman, an organization with extensive experience re-purposing serviceable medical equipment and transporting the equipment to healthcare facilities worldwide.

“The bridge represents a major advancement in the quality of care received by our Guatemalan patients suffering from various heart conditions,” said José Raúl Cruz Molina, M.D., Director of UNICAR and cardiologist trained at Carolinas Medical Center. “It brings our hospital system one step closer to offering leading-edge medical solutions to our communities.”

SHVI and UNICAR have a long-standing history of cooperation dating back to the early 1970s, when the Guatemalan Heart Program was established by SHVI cardiac surgeons and by Charlotte-trained Guatemalan physicians.

For decades, Heineman and CHS have worked together to help establish sustainable healthcare and medical programs in Guatemala and in other Central American countries. Through the International Medical Outreach Program—a partnership between CHS and Heineman—both organizations have donated a variety of much-needed medical equipment to hospitals and clinics overseas, including cardiac catheterization laboratories, operating tables, mobile X-Ray machines and respirators.