



# Carolinas HealthCare System

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## **Carolinas HealthCare System donates mobile cardiac laboratory to improve accessibility to heart care in Nicaragua**

*The International Medical Outreach Program donates second public heart catheterization laboratory in the country, helping meet growing need for procedure*

CHARLOTTE, N.C.—December 12, 2012—Representatives from [Carolinas HealthCare System](#) joined public health officials at a hospital in Managua, Nicaragua, for the official opening of the country's second public cardiac catheterization laboratory, donated by Carolinas HealthCare System's [International Medical Outreach](#) (IMO) Program.

The catheterization laboratory, or cath lab, was installed outside of the National Cardiology Center (Centro Nacional de Cardiología), located by the Roberto Calderón Gutierrez Hospital. The cath lab is a large, mobile unit used to diagnose and perform life-saving procedures on patients experiencing heart attack, chest pain or other symptoms of heart disease and can be deployed to rural areas of the country if needed. As a public care facility led by the country's Ministry of Public Health, the Cardiology Center provides free services to any patient seeking care.

“We are grateful for the opportunity to help Nicaragua's medical facilities treat additional patients and to facilitate the delivery of contemporary health care to the country's six million residents,” said Francis Robicsek, MD, PhD, vice president of the IMO Program, a partnership between Carolinas HealthCare System and the [Heineman Foundation of Charlotte](#). “This donation will immediately improve accessibility to heart care and help the National Cardiology Center offer sustainable, consistent services for years to come.”

Heart disease is a leading cause of death in Nicaragua and, until now, physicians at the Cardiology Center have had only one stationary cath lab to diagnose and treat patients despite a growing need for necessary treatment. From 2007 to 2011, the number of non-invasive and invasive procedures performed at the Cardiology Center jumped from 5,141 to 16,635 and from 116 to 736. The additional cath lab will allow cardiologists to potentially double the number of cardiac procedures performed and meet the growing needs of the region.

“The Nicaraguan Ministry of Public Health is grateful for Carolinas HealthCare System's unwavering support and commitment to our country,” said Carolina Dávila Murillo, Director of Health Services in Nicaragua. “This cardiac laboratory will allow our communities, especially residents with minimal resources, to access modern medical services routinely. This is part of a

bigger plan to restore people's right to obtain quality, affordable health care, an effort led by our government and our president, Commander José Daniel Ortega Saavedra.”

Since 2007, the IMO Program has led projects aimed at improving the health of adult and pediatric patients in Nicaragua. Its first project was to repair or replace the dilapidated equipment of the Intensive Care Unit at Manuel de Jesús Rivera (La Mascota) Pediatric Hospital, the country's largest pediatric facility. That same year, the Program helped rebuild the country's only public cath lab, which had broken and remained unused for at least one year. Prior to this project, Nicaraguan residents had limited cardiac care.

The IMO Program to date has donated and helped install six cath labs in Central America (in Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Belize), and it plans to soon donate a unit in El Salvador. The Program also offers free medical training opportunities to international techs, physicians and other clinicians, who must operate the cath labs or perform heart diagnostic or treatment procedures, including open heart surgery.

In Guatemala, the IMO Program's heart surgery training became an integral part of national cardiac services growth, allowing Guatemalan physicians to perform the country's first open heart surgeries in the mid-1970s. More recently, in Belize, a mobile cath lab donation in 2011 modernized heart care in the country by 30 years, and the Carolinas HealthCare System's IMO team helped perform that country's first open heart surgeries in July of this year.

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[Carolinas HealthCare System](http://www.carolinashealthcare.org) ([www.carolinashealthcare.org](http://www.carolinashealthcare.org)), one of the nation's leading and most innovative healthcare organizations, provides a full spectrum of healthcare and wellness programs throughout North and South Carolina. Its diverse network of care locations includes academic medical centers, hospitals, freestanding emergency departments, physician practices, surgical and rehabilitation centers, home health agencies, nursing homes and behavioral health centers, as well as hospice and palliative care services. CHS works to improve and enhance the overall health and wellbeing of its communities through high quality patient care, education and research programs, and numerous collaborative partnerships and initiatives.