



Carolinas HealthCare System

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## **Carolinas HealthCare System Launches Virtual Communication Portal with Large Public Hospital in Belize**

*Portal aims to improve cardiac patient diagnosis, treatment and  
to enhance collaboration with healthcare providers in Belize City*

**CHARLOTTE, N.C., Sept. 3, 2013** – Carolinas HealthCare System’s [International Medical Outreach program](#) and the System’s [Sanger Heart & Vascular Institute](#) launched a virtual communication portal with the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KHMH) in Belize City, Belize. It is the first portal established for consultation of cardiac cases in the public health system in Belize and the second launched by Carolinas HealthCare System in Central America.

The portal enables KHMH cardiologists to consult, in real-time, with Sanger cardiologists throughout North and South Carolina on complex cardiac diagnostic cases using advanced video capabilities and the transfer of echocardiographic and radiological images of Belizean patients. It also will allow for cardiologists and other care providers from both countries to make more informed, timely recommendations for treatment plans of different clinical conditions.

“We hope this capability will bring Belize one step closer to offering higher quality care at one of its largest public hospitals,” said Francis Robicsek, MD, PhD, vice president of International Medical Outreach at Carolinas HealthCare System. “Over the past two years, we have assisted the local authorities to render cardiac care to a large number of Belizean patients, something that previously was unattainable. We are proud of the growth of our collaboration with KHMH and look forward to continue assisting the hospital in establishing an up-to-date cardiology department so needed by thousands of patients.”

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in Belize, but public healthcare facilities lacked modern cardiac diagnostic and interventional capabilities until 2011. The International Medical Outreach program, a partnership between Carolinas HealthCare System and the [Heineman Foundation of Charlotte](#), donated a mobile catheterization laboratory to the KHMH, modernizing cardiac care in Belize by 30 years. In July 2012, medical teams from the KHMH and Carolinas HealthCare System jointly [performed the country’s first open heart surgery](#), making it possible to [implant the first stents](#) in Belizean patients in June 2013.

Since 2011, cardiology and surgical teams from Sanger have traveled to Belize every month to assist with cardiac catheterizations, open heart surgeries and stents. To date, more than 100 catheterizations and nearly 15 open heart surgeries have been performed on Belizean patients.

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“The collaboration between Carolinas HealthCare System and the KHMH has transformed the landscape of cardiac care delivery in the nation of Belize,” said Adrian Coye, MD, Director of Medical Services at the KHMH. “The impact has been tremendous and transformative, and it has brought access of services to patients who never before had them in this country. The combined good will of many has resulted in a virtual communication portal that will benefit all health caregivers but, most importantly, the patients. It will facilitate a multidisciplinary approach to care for patients in practically all disciplines and with input from medical specialists. I look forward to our continued, shared journey to remain a successful one.”

The communications portal allows for a range of providers from Belize City and North and South Carolina, including cardiologists, surgeons, advanced care practitioners and nurses, to participate in medical conferences and meetings and other opportunities virtually. Such collaboration can serve as a catalyst in providing world class care to Carolinas HealthCare System patients and to patients around the world. Carolinas HealthCare System facilities use a similar technology, allowing physicians throughout the System to collectively care for patients.

The first international communication portal at Carolinas HealthCare System was [launched in February 2012](#) with the Guatemalan Institute of Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery. The portal established the foundation for more frequent communications between providers in Guatemala City and Charlotte and to date has been used for a range of activities including conferencing between cardiologists and training between echo techs.

### **About Carolinas HealthCare System**

[Carolinas HealthCare System](#) ([carolinashealthcare.org](http://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. Carolinas HealthCare System works to enhance the overall health and wellbeing of its communities through high quality patient care, education and research programs, and numerous collaborative partnerships and initiatives.

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