



Carolinas HealthCare System

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Carolinas HealthCare System's International Medical Outreach program co-leads heart screening event for youth in Belize City

More than 100 teenagers and young adults were screened for cardiac health, half were found at risk for heart disease

CHARLOTTE, N.C., Aug. 3, 2015 – Carolinas HealthCare System joined the Heineman Foundation of Charlotte and the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KMH) last week in hosting the Heart of Belize Outreach event, for cardiac screenings for rheumatic heart disease and other heart abnormalities.

More than 100 youth, ages 16-30, were screened and half were found at risk for having the disease. Rheumatic heart disease is a chronic condition caused by rheumatic fever that affects the heart valve. If left untreated, it can lead to heart failure and death. Youth at risk received an EKG test or a cardiac echocardiography scan on-site, and all youth were encouraged to learn more about heart health at an education station. All screenings were free to participants.

“Rheumatic heart disease is one of the most common acquired heart disease in children in Belize,” said Dr. Adrian Coye, chief executive officer for the KMH, Belize’s only public tertiary care hospital. “Through events like these, we strive to engage our Belizean communities to learn more about this disease and to catch it in its early stages. Early detection leads to early effective treatment, which can save more lives.”

Coye, also a practicing heart surgeon at the KMH, performed the advanced heart screenings at the event alongside Theodore Frank, MD, director of Cardiac Transplantation at the Heart Failure Clinic at Carolinas HealthCare System’s Sanger Heart & Vascular Institute. Eight nursing students from Carolinas College of Health Sciences, part of Carolinas HealthCare System, also participated and helped with the initial screening of Belizean patients. The event was supported in part by Edwards Lifesciences Foundation’s Every Heart Beat Matters campaign.

The KMH’s cardiac surgery and cardiology programs are fully-equipped to perform diagnostic and interventional services, including echocardiographs, catheterizations (caths) and open-heart surgeries. Since 2011, KMH has performed more than 200 cardiac cath, 24 stents and 28 heart surgeries, including the first open heart surgery in the country.

These services have been possible through the donation of medical equipment by Carolinas HealthCare System's International Medical Outreach (IMO) program, a collaboration with the Heineman Foundation. The program also coordinates monthly travel of medical teams from

Sanger, in Charlotte, to the KMHM to train and assist Belizean teams in performing caths and heart surgeries.

"The outcomes and services of the cardiac care program at the KMHM are a living testimony to the level of professionalism and dedication of its medical staff and leadership," said Francis Robicsek, MD, PhD, vice president of the IMO Program. "For more than 50 years, our international medical outreach efforts have helped enhance the health of patients globally, and the efforts of the staff at the KMHM are truly exceptional."

About Carolinas HealthCare System

[Carolinas HealthCare System](http://carolinashealthcare.org) (*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.

About Heineman Foundation of Charlotte

Since its establishment in 1943, the Heineman Foundation of Charlotte has pursued a variety of local and international research and humanitarian projects focused on providing medical assistance and education. Located on the campus of Carolinas HealthCare System's Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, NC, Heineman works closely with the System to provide medical training focused on cardiac care to health providers abroad, and medical equipment and supplies to countries in need.

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