

The Gregorio Marañón University Hospital,
Madrid



A Year No One Could Have Predicted

As for many nonprofit organizations, 2020 has been an incredibly challenging year for Surgeons of Hope. We started off the year on a high note, with full readiness to launch a significant pediatric cardiac ICU Nurse training program to elevate patient care in Latin America, with generous help from Edwards Life-sciences Foundation, a longstanding supporter of Surgeons of Hope. We were also expecting to train a pediatric cardiac catheterization team from Paraguay at our partner teaching hospital, the Gregorio Marañón University Hospital in Madrid, Spain.



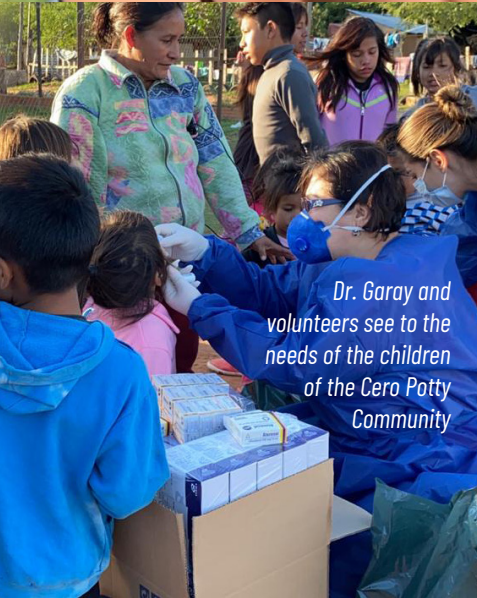
Our training programs were set to begin in April, which proved impossible to implement due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its rapid global spread. The program training site, Madrid's Gregorio Marañón University Hospital, was not allowed to add any staff from outside their hospital system, redirecting their efforts to fight COVID-19 (according to reporting from Johns Hopkins University, Spain has been one of the world's hardest COVID-hit countries).

We were also on the verge of sending our second surgical training mission to Paraguay. Our medical volunteers and program partners were eager to participate, given the success of last year's mission. In one week, ten open heart surgeries and twenty-five cardiac catheterizations were performed. Working hand in hand, the local and visiting teams were able to accomplish heroic feats with inadequate equipment, including saving the life of an infant who went into cardiac arrest.

The March 2020 mission to Paraguay, as well as anticipated surgical training missions to Costa Rica and Nicaragua, were all suspended. Given the rampaging waves of COVID-19 impacting the United States and Europe, as well as Latin America and other parts of the world, our medical volunteers have been unable to travel in 2020 – and for the foreseeable future – due to governmental and hospital-imposed restrictions.



Emiliano, pictured with his mother outside their home in Costa Rica



Dr. Garay and volunteers see to the needs of the children of the Cero Potty Community



Much needed food distribution for the Cero Potty Community in Paraguay

Our COVID-19 Response

To respond to the most pressing needs of our patients and their families, Surgeons of Hope worked with the local pediatric cardiac teams we support in Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Paraguay – and local NGOs – to distribute food and hygiene products to nearly 200 families. Born in Costa Rica with three heart defects, Emiliano is one of the many pediatric cardiac patients who benefited from Surgeons of Hope's COVID-19 response. Due to the pandemic, his parents were faced with a sudden loss of both incomes. Thanks to Surgeons of Hope's ability to respond and the generosity of our community, coupled with the teams at San José Children's



Rosaura with her grandmother at our Pediatric Heart Center in August 2019 (above), and at home receiving food & hygiene supplies in July 2020.

Rosaura is one of the patients who benefited from an intricate open-heart surgical procedure during Surgeons of Hope's most recent training mission to Nicaragua in August 2019. You will see how much she has grown since the heart operation, and how she is thriving in the continued care of her grandmother – and thanks to the vital support of donors like YOU! ❤️

Hospital and Asociación CEPIA, Emiliano and his family received a month's supply of food and hygiene products to ensure their health, as he awaited a follow-up procedure.

With the help of Surgeons of Hope's local representative, Dr. Gerardo Mejia, and a partnership with the Super Express grocery chain in Nicaragua, Surgeons of Hope reached pediatric cardiac patients well outside of Managua – a complex logistical challenge.

In Paraguay, patients and families in the pediatric cardiac program, led by Dr. Nancy Garay, received much needed food and hygiene products as well. When strict stay-at-home orders made it impossible for families to travel to the hospital, Dr. Garay and a team of volunteers turned their efforts to the Cero Potty Indigenous Community an hour outside of Asunción – the country's capital. They delivered the remaining food and hygiene products donated by Surgeons of Hope, as well as an additional donation of vitamins and shoes. True of many indigenous communities in Latin America, members of the Cero Potty Indigenous Community live in extreme poverty. Prior to the delivery of food, mothers were putting their children to sleep at 4 p.m. because they had nothing to feed them for dinner.

Critical medical supplies delivered to hospitals in Nicaragua and Paraguay included KN-95 masks donated by generous SOH corporate sponsor Full Circle.



In Paraguay, as baby Mia recovers from surgery to correct a severe congenital heart defect, her mother Ramona, holds her tiny hand.



Some of the medical supplies donated to the Acosta Ñu Children's Hospital in Paraguay

In addition to food, hygiene supplies, vitamins and shoes, Surgeons of Hope donated critical medicine and medical supplies (including 1,000 KN-95 masks) to its partner hospitals in Nicaragua and Paraguay. One of the children saved by these donations is Mia, who needed expensive medication to be kept alive until she could receive surgery. Within her first 30 days of life, Mia underwent three surgeries to correct the severe congenital heart defect she had been born with. Financial support, provided by Surgeons of Hope, allowed the Department of Cardiology at Acosta Ñu Children's Hospital to purchase the critical medication, and provided relief to Ramona (Mia's mother) and her family in the midst of so much anguish.

Leveraging the power of technology, Surgeons of Hope has been facilitating remote bi-weekly case consultation sessions to help the local medical teams review complex heart defects, and provide guidance on surgical procedures and best practices for optimal patient recovery. Sharing of COVID-19 treatment updates and best practices among our partners led to the first case of multi-inflammatory syndrome being diagnosed at La Mascota Children's Hospital in Nicaragua.

Our 2020 Gala Goes Virtual

Determined to offer our traditional Charitable Gala evening, Surgeons of Hope reimagined the popular annual event, welcoming nearly 300 friends and supporters to a virtual, remote celebration in honor of our Heart Heroes.



The enticements for the evening were tempting, including fabulous home-delivered gourmet meals, and an alluring array of donated auction items. From the start, we did not know how the event would be received or whether the response would be as robust as it needed to be.

But when the November date arrived after months of planning, designing and quite a bit of filming, the response was both gratifying and energizing.

Attendees met the at-home, socially-distanced moment with gala attire, gourmet meals, champagne and good humor. They leaned in to hear Surgeons of Hope's leaders, medical volunteers and partners share heartfelt messages of commitment to Surgeons of Hope, our accomplishments in Latin America for children with heart disease and our firm resolve to continue the hard-won progress.



And then, not surprisingly because we know their kindness, our guests opened their hearts to give freely and generously. The evening became a financial success as Surgeons of Hope reached and then even surpassed the evening's fundraising goal. But, more than that, Surgeons of Hope's virtual 2020 Gala drew our friends and supporters closer to Surgeons of Hope, embracing the promise that we offer to some of the world's poorest children in need of our help.

Surgeons of Hope, our generous donors and our friends created a memorable Gala evening that will sustain us and support our programs until we can hopefully gather together again in person for our next Gala, in 2021.

Our Commitment Remains Steadfast

While we are unable to conduct in-person surgical training missions at this time, Surgeons of Hope remains steadfastly committed to our mission. We are continuing progress in the countries we serve, absolutely present for our local medical teams as they care for little patients in need of corrective heart surgery.

To remain in touch with us in 2021, visit our website to read our latest news at www.surgeonsofhope.org.

*Thank you to all of our generous donors for opening your hearts and continuing to support children in critical need of heart surgery!
And thank you to our medical volunteers and our partners on the ground for going above and beyond to meet the challenges presented by COVID-19.*

