

September 27, 2002

For Immediate Use

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Condition Report: Twins at Mattel Children's Hospital One twin moved from intensive care unit into regular patient room

(Note to Editors: No doctors are available for interviews.)

Maria de Jesus Quiej Alvarez, one of the conjoined twins separated at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital in August, has been upgraded to good condition and was moved from the pediatric intensive care unit into a regular patient room on Thursday, Sept. 26.

Her sister, Maria Teresa, also continues to improve and has been upgraded to fair condition in the pediatric intensive care unit. In the weeks following the separation surgery, Maria Teresa underwent several follow-up surgical procedures, and her recovery has lagged behind her sister's.

"Maria de Jesus was able to leave the intensive care unit because she no longer requires a drain to relieve extra fluid from her brain. Her vital signs look great and she continues to make strides each day," said Dr. Jorge Lazareff, director of the UCLA Pediatric Neurosurgery Program and lead neurosurgeon on the case. "We feel confident that her sister, Maria Teresa, will join her soon."

The 14-month-old Guatemalan girls, born conjoined at the head, were separated during a nearly 23-hour surgery on Aug. 6. Doctors anticipate that the twins will be well enough to return to Guatemala in October.

-UCLA-

September 18, 2002

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Condition Report: Twins at Mattel Children's Hospital Plastic Surgeons Apply Skin Substitute to Girls' Scalps

(Note to Editors: No doctors are available for interviews.)

UCLA plastic surgeons yesterday completed a series of bedside procedures to promote skin growth in sections of the formerly conjoined Guatemalan twins' scalps that are healing slowly. Doctors at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital remain optimistic that Maria Teresa and Maria de Jesus Quiej Alvarez's recovery is on track.

"We cleaned debris from Maria Teresa's skin flaps and applied a special skin substitute that encourages cell growth and promotes rapid healing," explained Dr. Henry Kawamoto Jr., lead plastic and reconstructive surgeon for the twins' medical team. Doctors performed the procedure at Maria Teresa's bedside in the pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) after administering local anesthetic.

Surgeons had performed the same procedure on her sister, Maria de Jesus, during a routine surgery on Aug. 30. Her scalp has now grown enough to cover her entire skull and brain. UCLA physicians are hopeful that the skin substitute will enable Maria Teresa's scalp to grow enough to completely cover her head before she goes home with her sister.

Donated to the twins' cases by Johnson & Johnson, INTEGRA Dermal Regeneration Template is a skin replacement product designed to close wounds and regenerate the skin. INTEGRA is composed of a dermal layer of collagen fibers and a synthetic epidermal layer.

Both Maria Teresa and Maria de Jesus remain in serious condition with stable vital signs in the PICU at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital. Maria de Jesus likes to watch the nurses read books to her, eats solid food, holds her own bottle and interacts with visitors. Although she is recovering more slowly, Maria Teresa makes eye contact with visitors, reacts to touch and responds to musical toys.

UCLA doctors are cautiously optimistic about the twins' long-term prospects for recovery. Surgeons separated the one-year old Guatemalan girls, born joined at the head, during a nearly 23-hour surgery on Aug. 6.

-UCLA-

September 16, 2002

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Condition Report: Twins at Mattel Children's Hospital U.S. Secretary of Labor to Visit Twins and Commend Nurses Involved With Their Care

(New photos and b-roll footage of the twins will be available at a press briefing with U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao on Sept. 18 at 3:10 p.m. at the entrance to UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital located on Tiverton Drive.)

Maria Teresa and Maria de Jesus Quiej Alvarez remain in serious condition with stable vital signs in the pediatric intensive care unit at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital. Doctors report no major changes in their conditions. The 1-year-old Guatemalan girls, born joined at the head, were separated during a nearly 23-hour surgery on Aug. 6.

Also notable, the twins will receive a visit from U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao on Sept. 18. Chao will tour UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital and meet with nurses who participated in the surgery to separate the conjoined twins, as well as those nurses who have been caring for them during their recovery. The Secretary will hold a press conference at UCLA to encourage Americans to consider careers in nursing. The twins' doctors will also be available to provide condition updates.

-UCLA-

September 6, 2002

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Condition Report: Twins at Mattel Children's Hospital at UCLA No changes in condition

(No hospital personnel are available for interviews. The next media update will be distributed by fax on Friday, Sept. 13.)

There are no changes reported in the conditions of Maria Teresa and Maria de Jesus Quiej Alvarez. Both girls remain in serious condition with stable vital signs in the pediatric intensive care unit at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital.

UCLA doctors remain cautiously optimistic about the twins' long-term prospects for recovery. Surgeons separated the 1-year-old Guatemalan girls, born joined at the head, during a nearly 23-hour surgery on Aug. 6.

-UCLA-

September 3, 2002

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Condition Report: Twins at Mattel Children's Hospital at UCLA No change over weekend

(No hospital personnel are available for interviews. The next media update will be distributed by fax on Friday.)

Both Maria Teresa and Maria de Jesus Quiej Alvarez remain in serious condition with stable vital signs in the pediatric intensive care unit at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital.

UCLA doctors are cautiously optimistic about the twins' long-term prospects for recovery. Surgeons separated the 1-year-old Guatemalan girls, born joined at the head, during a nearly 23-hour surgery on Aug. 6.

-UCLA-