

May 30, 2003

For Immediate Use

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Surgery for Guatemalan Twin Maria Teresa Successfully Completed

(No spokespersons are available for interviews. No further updates planned until next week.)

Shunt-replacement surgery for Guatemalan twin Maria Teresa Quiej Alvarez was completed on Friday, May 30, at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital.

"The surgery went as planned," said Dr. Jorge Lazareff, lead neurosurgeon for the twins' medical team and director of pediatric neurosurgery. "However, it will be at least a week before we will see the results of the surgery and its impact on Maria Teresa's medical condition."

In addition to the shunt replacement, surgeons also performed an additional procedure.

"A tube was placed into her stomach for nutritional support and an anti-reflux surgery was performed to prevent aspiration," said Dr. James Atkinson, chief of pediatric surgery at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital. "The entire procedure was performed using a laparoscope and minimally invasive surgical techniques."

Maria Teresa's vital signs remain stable and she's in the pediatric intensive care unit.

"It's so comforting to know that she's under the care of the doctors and nurses at UCLA," said Cris Embleton, co-founder of Healing the Children. "I can hardly wait to hold her again and to see her smile again."

Her twin sister, Maria de Jesus Quiej Alvarez, remains in good condition and may be discharged sometime next week.

Healing the Children, the non-profit organization that worked to bring the twins to UCLA last year, arranged for the girls to fly to Los Angeles on May 22. The twins' parents remain in Guatemala.

To donate to the twins' care, please send checks payable to the UCLA Foundation to the Twins Care at UCLA Fund, UCLA Medical Sciences Development, 10945 Le Conte Ave., Suite 3132, Los Angeles, CA 90095.

The formerly conjoined twins were separated during a nearly 23-hour surgery at UCLA on Aug. 6, 2002. They returned to Guatemala on Jan. 13.

-UCLA-

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Surgery Anticipated for Guatemalan Twin Maria Teresa on Friday, May 30

(Note to Editors: Images available upon request.)

Shunt replacement surgery for Guatemalan twin Maria Teresa Quiej Alvarez is scheduled for this Friday, May 30, at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital, according to Dr. Jorge Lazareff, lead neurosurgeon for the twins' medical team and director of pediatric neurosurgery.

As a result of last year's separation surgery, the cerebral spinal fluid in Maria Teresa's brain cannot flow normally through the drainage veins at the base of her head. UCLA doctors installed the shunt to help her veins manage the extra fluid. When Maria Teresa contracted E. coli meningitis in Guatemala in April, the shunt became infected and was removed. However, she remains stable in the pediatric intensive care unit and listed in fair condition.

Her twin sister, Maria de Jesus Quiej Alvarez, remains in good condition and may be discharged in the near future.

Healing the Children, the nonprofit organization that worked to bring the twins to UCLA last year, arranged for the girls to fly to Los Angeles on May 22. The twins' parents remain in Guatemala.

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May 27, 2003

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Guatemalan Twins Continue to Improve at UCLA, Surgery Anticipated for Maria Teresa Later This Week

Maria Teresa and Maria de Jesus Quiej Alvarez continue to undergo medical tests and examinations this week at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital, but UCLA doctors say their conditions continue to improve.

According to Dr. Jorge Lazareff, lead neurosurgeon for the twins' medical team and director of pediatric neurosurgery, Maria Teresa will likely have a new shunt placed in her brain to drain fluids later this week, depending on test results.

As a result of last year's separation surgery, the cerebral spinal fluid in Maria Teresa's brain cannot flow normally through the drainage veins at the base of her head. UCLA doctors installed the shunt to help her veins manage the extra fluid. When Maria Teresa contracted E. Coli meningitis in Guatemala in April, the shunt became infected. However, she is currently stable in the pediatric intensive care unit and listed in fair condition.

"Maria de Jesus appears to be in excellent health and is listed in good condition," said Lazareff. "She is the joy of all the nurses that took care of her while she was here several months ago. She suffered one seizure last week in Guatemala due to a fever, but is doing quite well now. She is almost well enough to be discharged."

Both Lazareff and lead plastic and reconstructive surgeon Dr. Henry Kawamoto hope the sisters will be well enough to travel back to their home in the very near future.

"Maria de Jesus has a very minor scalp wound," said Kawamoto. "Both girls will need more plastic surgery to restore their full hairlines in the future, but I am confident that my counterparts in Guatemala can perform these procedures."

Healing the Children, the non-profit organization that worked to bring the twins to UCLA last year, arranged for the girls to fly to Los Angeles on May 22. The twins' parents remain in Guatemala.

"We are asking people to help underwrite the expense of the twins' medical care by giving to UCLA and Healing the Children," said Cris Embleton, co-founder of Healing the Children. "We are grateful for all the prayers and donations people have already made on their behalf."

To donate to the twins' care, please send checks payable to the UCLA Foundation to the "Twins Care at UCLA" Fund, UCLA Medical Sciences Development, 10945 Le Conte Ave., Suite 3132, Los Angeles, CA 90095.

The formerly conjoined twins were separated during a nearly 23-hour surgery at UCLA on Aug. 6, 2002. They returned to Guatemala on January 13.

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May 23, 2003

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Guatemalan Twins Undergoing Medical Evaluation at UCLA

(NOTE TO EDITORS: A PRESS BRIEFING WILL TAKE PLACE TUESDAY, MAY 27, AT 11 A.M. OUTSIDE UCLA'S MATTEL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL. NO DOCTORS OR SPOKESPERSONS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS DURING THE HOLIDAY WEEKEND.)

Maria Teresa and Maria de Jesus Quiej Alvarez are undergoing medical tests and examinations today at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital. During the next several days, doctors will be evaluating the twins' medical conditions and making decisions on appropriate treatment for each of the girls.

"At UCLA Mattel Children's Hospital, many of us – doctors, nurses, administrators – developed a real attachment to the girls over the seven months they were here. We are committed to doing all we can to bring them to good health," said Dr. Jorge Lazareff, lead neurosurgeon for the twins' medical team and director of pediatric neurosurgery.

The formerly conjoined twins were separated during a nearly 23-hour surgery at UCLA on Aug. 6, 2002. They returned to Guatemala on January 13.

To donate to the twins' care, please send checks payable to the UCLA Foundation to the "Twins Care at UCLA" Fund, UCLA Medical Sciences Development, 10945 Le Conte Ave., Suite 3132, Los Angeles, CA 90095.

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Guatemalan Twins Return to UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital

(NOTE TO EDITORS: NO DOCTORS OR SPOKESPERSONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS. NO NEW PHOTOS OR B-ROLL ARE AVAILABLE.)

Formerly conjoined Guatemalan twins Maria de Jesus and Maria Teresa Quiej Alvarez arrived at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital for evaluation on Thursday afternoon. UCLA physicians are currently examining the girls to determine their medical condition.

The hospital will provide further information about the twins' condition, pending consent from the girls' parents or legal guardian.

To donate to the twins' care, please send checks payable to the UCLA Foundation to: "Twins Care at UCLA" Fund, UCLA Medical Sciences Development, 10945 Le Conte Ave., Suite 3132, Los Angeles, CA 90095.

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