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For Immediate Use

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Update on the Guatemalan Separated Twins

Separated Guatemalan twins, Maria de Jesus and Maria Teresa Quiej Alvarez, remain in the Los Angeles area after returning to UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital on May 22 for follow-up care. Both girls are staying at the homes of volunteers from Healing the Children, the nonprofit organization that arranged their surgery and care with UCLA. A date for their return to Guatemala, where their parents remain, will be determined by Healing the Children, the nonprofit organization who brought the twins to UCLA.

Maria Teresa is recovering slowly but steadily from the meningitis that affected her 8 months after the separation surgery, and 4 months after she returned to Guatemala. The specific type of meningitis that she suffered caused anatomical damage to her brain anatomy. Dr. Jorge Lazareff, the lead neurosurgeon on the twins' case, said Maria Teresa is able to interact with her environment, and he remains optimistic that Maria Teresa will continue to improve from her severe neurological setback.

Maria de Jesus is doing very well and progressing steadily towards an independent life. She talks and is able to walk with assistance.

The formerly conjoined twins were separated during a nearly 23-hour surgery at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital on Aug. 6, 2002. They flew home to Guatemala on Jan. 13, and then returned to Los Angeles on May 22 for additional medical care.

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