

April 29, 2003

For Immediate Use

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Roxanne Moster, roxannem@support.ucla.edu

Amy Waddell, awaddell@support.ucla.edu

Elaine Schmidt, elaines@support.ucla.edu

UCLA Health Sciences Media Relations

(310) 794-0777

UCLA Physician Provides Update on Condition of Separated Twin, Maria Teresa Quiej Alvarez

Dr. Jorge Lazareff, director of pediatric neurosurgery at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital provided an update today from Guatemala on the condition of Maria Teresa Quiej Alvarez, who has been hospitalized with E. Coli meningitis.

"I am absolutely pleased with how Maria Teresa is doing," said Lazareff. "She is out of the intensive care unit and in a regular patient room, and her condition has been upgraded from critical to serious."

Lazareff added that Maria Teresa is rapidly improving with antibiotic treatments.

Lazareff, and two UCLA anesthesiologists who were part of the team that separated the conjoined twins last year, traveled to Guatemala on April 28 at the invitation of Dr. Ludwig Ovalle at Hospital del Pilar in Guatemala City to consult on Maria Teresa Quiej Alvarez's treatment for E. Coli meningitis.

-UCLA-

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UCLA Physicians Travel to Guatemala to Consult with Doctors Caring for Separated Twin, Maria Teresa Quiej Alvarez

Dr. Jorge Lazareff, director of pediatric neurosurgery at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital, and two UCLA anesthesiologists who were part of the team that separated the conjoined twins last year, will travel to Guatemala tonight. The UCLA physicians have been invited by Dr. Ludwig

Ovalle at Hospital del Pilar in Guatemala City to consult on Maria Teresa Quiej Alvarez's treatment for E. Coli meningitis.

"The good news is that that Maria Teresa's condition has improved significantly and she is doing much better," said Lazareff. "Dr. Ovalle has provided her with excellent care and has invited us to Guatemala to consult on her case. We have remained in close contact with him since the twins left UCLA on January 13, and I have offered our ongoing support."

Joining Lazareff will be Dr. Barbara Van De Wiele and Dr. Swati Patel, who led the team of UCLA anesthesiologists during the 23-hour separation surgery last August. In March, the three doctors reunited with the Quiej Alvarez family in Guatemala during a volunteer medical trip. A team of UCLA medical specialists has made several trips there to provide medical services to dozens of children suffering from neurological diseases and to help train local doctors.

The UCLA doctors are scheduled to return to Los Angeles on April 30.

-UCLA-

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Elaine Schmidt, elaines@support.ucla.edu

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Statement On Condition of Separated Twin, Maria Teresa Quiej Alvarez

(Note to Editors: In response to media reports concerning the medical status of Maria Teresa Quiej Alvarez, one of the Guatemalan twins separated at Mattel Children's Hospital at UCLA, please find below a statement from UCLA.)

"Since the departure of the twins, Maria Teresa and Maria de Jesus Quiej Alvarez, from UCLA Medical Center on January 13, we have remained in constant contact with their medical team in Guatemala. We are aware that Maria Teresa is currently being treated for E. Coli meningitis at the Hospital del Pilar in Guatemala City. The treatment she is receiving is appropriate, and her pediatrician, Dr. Ludwig Ovalle, is an excellent pediatrician. We hold the utmost trust in our colleagues from Guatemala and know they are providing Maria Teresa with the best of care."

--Jorge Lazareff M.D., director, pediatric neurosurgery, UCLA Medical Center.

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