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Guatemalan Twin Maria Teresa Discharged From UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital

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

Doctors at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital discharged 2-year-old Guatemalan twin Maria Teresa Queij Alvarez on Sept. 11. She is staying with local volunteers from Healing the Children.

"Maria Teresa suffered a very significant setback in her neurological development as a result of the meningitis," said Dr. Jorge Lazareff, lead neurosurgeon for the twins' medical team and director of pediatric neurosurgery. "Since returning to UCLA on May 22, her progress has been slow, but steady, and she shows signs of improvement. We remain cautiously optimistic for her future."

UCLA doctors also say that Maria Teresa's vision and hearing capabilities are impaired, and they plan to perform tests in the next few months to determine the extent of damage.

"We're thrilled that Maria Teresa is well enough to leave the hospital," said Cris Embleton, co-founder of Healing the Children. "While it is true that we have gone through some trying times with moments of despair, she has shown such resilience in the last month that we are very hopeful about her recovery. We wish to thank again the UCLA medical team for giving us such hope."

Her twin sister, Maria de Jesus has been staying at the home of a local Healing the Children volunteer.

"Maria de Jesus, continues to do remarkably well, and we are immensely pleased with her neurological condition and her development," Lazareff said.

Both twins will continue with their physical and occupational rehabilitation. Although they will stay in separate homes, volunteers plan to have the twins visit each other regularly, especially since they enjoy being together. According to Embleton, the parents have not set a date yet for the twins' return to Guatemala, where the girls' parents remain.

The formerly conjoined twins were separated during a nearly 23-hour surgery at UCLA 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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