

Andean Health & Development

Quality, sustainable health care for Latin America's underserved

Spring 2020 Update



From the Field

by Dr. David Gaus

Are hospitals good for the health of our communities? At first glance, you might say, “of course!” But peel off a few layers and you might find some sticky questions. Why do hospitals and hospital procedures cost so much? Does the health benefit they provide justify the cost, especially when compared to other health interventions outside of the hospital? As just one example, how does the impact of a \$15,000 heart bypass surgery compare to 15,000 vaccinations at \$1 each? Likewise, we often wonder why so many health dollars are spent near the end of life for sometimes seemingly needless interventions, when less costly and often more humane palliative or hospice care options are readily available.

Thirty years ago, international health experts at the World Health Assembly in Alma Ata asked these questions as they unveiled for the world the newly minted concept of primary healthcare strategy. At the time, the role of hospitals in primary healthcare was left unresolved. Since then, however, the small rural hospital has gained traction within renewed primary care strategy in low- and middle-income countries.

We wrote about this topic in the *PanAmerican Journal of Public Health* and in *Health Affairs* over ten years ago. Recently, an interesting Perspective appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, effectively “resuscitating” the discussion of the “rural hospital as part of primary healthcare” once again. This letter, which came from Nepal, addressed many of the same issues we have been talking about for years, validating to a great degree our 23 years of work in the Ecuadorian countryside.

These Nepali writers, like us at Andean Health, see the small rural hospital as the hub of health activity in a community, including training, referrals, supervision, and public health surveillance. We believe that curative services complement preventive services. If communities don’t trust and therefore don’t use curative services, health officials won’t know what preventive services they should provide.

When these small rural hospitals in low-income countries, public or private, are not well supported, they face significant, daily challenges. How do you perform an emergency cesarean section to save the life of a mother and her baby, for example, without electricity, clean water, sterile gowns or surgical instruments--or sometimes even without qualified personnel to perform the surgery?

After that article appeared, we connected with the Nepali writers, along with South African physicians working in rural (district) hospitals. We found surprising commonalities in the challenges we each face and our attempted solutions. To continue this conversation, we proposed a symposium at a global health conference later this year when more than 100 countries will be represented. We hope this is one of many ways to spread our lessons learned in Ecuador to a much broader, global audience.

David



David Gaus, MD, MPH/TM, is the Founder and CEO of Andean Health & Development.

With your support, we have provided 22 years of quality, sustainable health care for Latin America's underserved.

Transformative Grant for the Andean Health Institute

Some wonderful news came our way at the end of last year. We received a transformative \$1 million grant from the Margaret Darrin Foundation! The majority of the gift is to catalyze our Andean Health Institute where we feel we can have great impact in the area of health policy, research, the organization of our resident graduates, and in measuring our own clinical impact. This institute, coupled with our hospitals and clinics, provides a unique opportunity. Mrs. Darrin passed away two years ago, and her wonderful generosity will indeed transform this initiative.

Please understand that this grant is not for the general operating budget, so we will continue to depend on our very successful development work for these expenses going forward. I ask you to join me in celebrating this incredible gift from Mrs. Darrin that will truly take our organization to a whole different level in the global health arena.

Congratulations,

David



What is the Andean Health Institute?

Research & Global Health Leadership

AHD has created the Andean Health Institute (AHI) to support the AHD mission by conducting research on the determinants of health and disease in rural Latin America and by sharing AHD's lessons learned with the larger public health community. AHI engages strategic operational and academic partners, and influences policies to provide quality, accessible, and sustainable health care in rural Latin America.

In partnership with the University of Notre Dame's Eck Institute for Global Health, the AHI currently conducts research on:

- Antibiotic resistance in the community
- Human papillomavirus (HPV)

AHI's leaders share lessons learned with the global health community through:

- Their online quarterly medical journal, *Salud Rural*, whose website receives 7,000 visits a month from people in six Spanish-speaking countries
- The Saludesas clinical manual, which is shared widely among Spanish-speaking health professionals in low-resource settings
- Speaking at global health conferences and publishing research in scientific journals



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Remembering Dan Meehan

One of our very special donors, Daniel Meehan, passed away on December 30, 2019. Dan was one of Andean Health's original contributors and was instrumental in the building of Hospital Pedro Vicente Maldonado in 2000 and Hesburgh Hospital's neonatal unit in 2014.

David Gaus's reflection was published in the book about Andean Health, *Long Road from Quito*.

"Halfway through [a fundraising] lunch, who should walk in but Dan Meehan, who told everyone he'd just come from loading a container of donated medical supplies from some belly-up clinic in Milwaukee, and he was shipping it off to South Africa. [...] Dan comes in sweaty and grungy, but he sits down and listens to me for about fifteen minutes. Then he says, 'How much money do you need?' I said \$150,000. He said, 'I'll give it to you. Come over to my house tomorrow and we'll work out the details.' After lunch, I got back in my car and started crying. Dan had literally put us on the map. Elizabeth saw my red eyes when I got home and thought something bad had happened. I told her about Dan's gift and cried some more. I think the year and a half up to that point had just caught up with me."

We will miss him.



David Gaus, Dan Meehan, and Fr. Ted Hesburgh at the dedication of Hospital PVM in 2000



Fr. Ted presented a plaque to Dan in 2010 to thank him for the transformative gifts he made to AHD.

A special gift from Fr. Hesburgh

Hesburgh Hospital now displays Father Ted's statue thanks to a special gift from the Hesburgh family.

"The Blessed Mother's Statue had its place on the mantelpiece of our home at 609 Charmouth Drive, Syracuse, New York. It was there through my childhood and remained there until my father died (1960) and my mother moved. It also was there throughout Ted's childhood and adolescent years, and until he left for the seminary. After my mother moved she gave the statue to Ted, who displayed it in his office at Notre Dame. It remained there until Ted died in 2015 and was returned to us for safe keeping. When we learned of the new Hesburgh Hospital in Ecuador we thought that it would be fitting to be displayed there, essentially as a gift from Ted's family. She could look over the safety and well being of the hospital named for Ted."

- James Hesburgh



Pictured is AHD Advisory Board Member, Maureen Hesburgh Ryan (ND'84), on behalf of her family, presenting the statue to Dr. Gaus, Dr. Diego Herrera, (Director of Hesburgh Hospital) and Diego's daughter.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Coronavirus is in Ecuador. Visit andeanhealth.org to learn the latest information on AHD's efforts to manage and control this virus within an already underserved population.

2020 AHD Bike Ride

For nine years, a group of people who are passionate about the humanitarian work of Andean Heath have gotten together annually to learn of the progress of AHD's work in Ecuador while doing something that they love: cycling!

The 2020 ride will be in spectacular **Santa Fe, New Mexico, September 20-25**. We invite you, friends of AHD, to join the trip to learn more about this cause, to help raise money for Hesburgh Hospital in Ecuador, and to share some laughs! Info on how to sign up (via Trek Travel) or how to support the riders' campaign is at andeanhealth.org.



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Please donate to train local doctors and provide high quality medical care to Ecuador's underserved.

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Checks may be made payable to Andean Health & Development and sent to 1100 Delaplaine Ct., Madison, WI 53715 or made online at www.andeanhealth.org.

AHD is a 501(c)(3) non-profit; donations are tax-exempt. Tax ID: 39-1809174. AHD's financials are audited annually by Lulloff, Leben & Taylor, LLC. Kindly ask if your company matches donations. Please also consider bequests and planned gifts by beneficiary designation left to AHD, which can ensure long-term impact. Thank you!

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