



Heart to Heart Global Cardiac Care

Measurably Expanding Access Since 1989

SITE: NATIONAL HOSPITAL
LOCATION: ASUNCION, PARAGUAY

APRIL 04-13 2019
EXPLORATORY SURGICAL-
EDUCATIONAL MISSION



THE HOUSEHOLD AND THE FAMILY

Emiliano is a youthful, fit man. He lives in the city of San Lorenzo, eight miles from Asuncion, a 90-minute drive by car to the hospital. His jobs have always been physically demanding. Previously, he worked in construction as a carpenter; currently he fixes wheels and tires in an auto repair shop. He cannot afford to be slowed down by heart problems. Emiliano's teenage nephew, who accompanied his uncle to the National Hospital, sits nearby throughout our interview.

When asked about his favorite pastimes and hobbies, this quiet and soft-spoken man hesitates, but his nephew quickly jumps in to answer. "My uncle loves the internet. He is always watching soccer games and car racing on his phone!"

MEDICAL HISTORY

Emiliano has a serious, life-threatening heart condition: endocarditis and a failing aortic valve. Endocarditis is an infection of the inner lining of the heart and generally occurs when bacteria or other germs from another part of the body, such as the mouth, spread through the bloodstream and attach to the damaged tissue of the heart. His symptoms appeared relatively recently: three months ago, he contracted a fever and felt pain throughout his entire body. Doctors discovered that Emiliano's aortic valve was not closing properly – causing regurgitation (backwards blood flow).

Emiliano tells us that he recently underwent extensive dental work, a known risk factor for contracting endocarditis. In the U.S., many patients with diagnosed heart problems are prescribed antibiotics prior to teeth cleaning or other dental work to reduce the incidence of such complications. But this is not standard protocol in Paraguay. Fortunately, Emiliano's heart condition is still surgically treatable.

CURRENT CONDITION

Thanks to our collaboration with Edwards Lifesciences and Americares, the joint Heart to Heart-Paraguay team was able to perform open heart surgery and replace Emiliano's diseased aortic valve. Fortunately, Emiliano will not have to take a blood thinner for the rest of his life because he received a bioprosthetic valve as opposed to a mechanical valve; the latter is still more commonly used in valve replacement surgery throughout Latin America. Thanks to this new valve, he will be able to continue working and maintain his current lifestyle. Emiliano looks forward to visiting with family, and to sharing more internet videos with his rambunctious nephew.

PATIENT PROFILE

Name	Emiliano S.
Age	41 years old
DOB	November 2, 1977
Home	San Lorenzo, Paraguay
Diagnosis	Aortic valve endocarditis
Surgical procedure	Aortic valve and aortic root replacements April 12, 2019

Based on an interview conducted by Josie Everett, Heart to Heart staff, with the aid of a volunteer interpreter.