



REPORT
GENERAL SURGERY MISSION TRIP

March 10-16, 2018
Cochabamba, Bolivia



Solidarity Bridge, Puente de Solidaridad, and Viedma Hospital leadership and partners gathered to celebrate the Rotary Club donation of a new laparoscopic tower and instruments.

(l-r) Patricia Vargas, Executive Director of Puente de Solidaridad; Dr. Gay Garrett, general surgeon and Solidarity Bridge missionary; Dr. Rene García, neurosurgeon at Viedma Hospital; Dr. Walter Antezana, Dr. Johnny Camacho and Dr. Jaime Vallejos, general surgeons at Viedma Hospital; and Dr. Richard Moser, neurosurgeon and Solidarity Bridge board member.

I. INTRODUCTION

Solidarity Bridge has hosted a General Surgery Mission Trip (GSMT) to Cochabamba, Bolivia, each year since 2007. One of the primary focuses over this decade has been to train, supply, and equip Bolivian surgeons, anesthesiologists, and others serving the country's low-income population in laparoscopic surgery. In late 2015, Solidarity Bridge began discussions with **Rotary Club Chicago** and **Rotary Club Cochabamba** to develop an international project, known as **Global Grant #1750431 – Laparoscopic Surgeries for Bolivia**, to significantly upgrade the laparoscopic equipment at Cochabamba's most important public hospital, the Viedma Hospital. Through the leadership of these two Clubs, the financial contributions of more than a dozen other Rotary Clubs from around the world, and the Rotary Foundation, a new, fully-equipped laparoscopic tower and instrument set were delivered to Viedma Hospital in early 2018.

The purpose of the 2018 General Surgery Mission Trip was to bring together long-time partners at Viedma Hospital and a leading Solidarity Bridge mission laparoscopist for an inaugural week of surgeries using the new equipment. The joint team effort aimed to assure full implementation and optimal use of the state-of-the-art technology provided with the new equipment. The mission trip would also provide surgeries for a selected group of low-income patients.

II. MISSION GOALS and ACTIVITIES

This Mission Trip had several specific goals:

A. To commemorate and launch full use of new laparoscopic equipment at Viedma Hospital.

As illustrated in the photo at the beginning of this report, the mission week began with a ceremony to commemorate the launch of the newly donated equipment. Solidarity Bridge was represented by its founder, Juan Lorenzo Hinojosa, and Senior Director of Medical Programs, Lindsay Doucette. They were accompanied by U.S. missionaries from the General Surgery Mission Trip itself as well as a Solidarity Bridge Neurosurgery Mission Team present in Cochabamba for a separate mission trip. They joined Puente de Solidaridad staff and Viedma Hospital leadership and physicians to take a close look at the many parts of the new equipment and instruments and to publicly thank the Rotary Club partners for their generous donation.

B. To advance training of established surgical partners.

The training provided on this mission trip occurred primarily through mentored surgeries, in which the Bolivian partners took the lead while the Solidarity Bridge mission surgeon assisted or observed. At the request of the Bolivian partners, the vast majority of cases were hernia surgeries of various types, in order for the doctors to hone their skills in hernia repairs.

C. To provide surgeries for a group of low-income patients

19 patients were served on this trip, including 18 men and women ranging in age from 20 to 59 who benefitted from hernia repairs. In addition, one 71-year-old male suffering from Chagas' megacolon underwent a highly-complex colon surgery performed jointly by mission surgeon Dr. Gay Garrett and the Viedma partners.

D. To fill supply needs for continued use of the new laparoscopic equipment and to assess equipping and training opportunities to expand its use.

An estimated **\$149,832.46** worth of medical supplies were delivered by the mission team, including a large stock of mesh and disposable instruments and supplies required for various types of laparoscopic surgeries. Many of the high value supplies were personally selected by missionary Dr. Garrett for use on the mission and in the coming months by our Bolivian medical partners. Other key donors included MAP International, AmeriCares, and Medtronic.

The mission team and Bolivian partners also discussed additional equipment needs to optimize use of the laparoscopic tower, such as electrosurgical tools required for more delicate cases including colon and esophageal surgeries.

III. PATIENT STORY

Nayla is a 20-year-old student and athlete, who dreams of one day working as a professional gym instructor.

While working out at the school gym, Nayla began to feel persistent pain, in particular when lifting weights. A hernia diagnosis threatened her professional plans. She was told she needed surgery, and that a laparoscopic approach would give her a better chance to recover quickly and completely. Nayla had no money to pay for laparoscopic surgery

even at a public hospital. A short time later, Nayla's hopes were renewed when she heard a public service announcement about the arrival of a Solidarity Bridge mission team to the local Viedma Hospital.



Although eager to treat her hernia, Nayla was nervous about undergoing surgery. She had a chance to talk through her concerns when Puente de Solidaridad social worker Marizol Mamani brought the mission team's bilingual nurse, Gisselle Spina (at left in photo) to meet Nayla in her home and answer her questions. It was a helpful experience for Gisselle as well, who learned more about the daily realities of the patients she helped serve as a missionary. Nayla's surgery was performed on March 14 by Viedma surgeons Dr. Vallejos and Dr. Tapia, with missionary Dr. Garrett observing. Nayla has since enjoyed a full recovery.

IV. MISSION TEAM & STAFF

We are grateful for the many named and unnamed individuals – Viedma staff, multiple donors and other supporters, and families and colleagues back home – who together made this mission possible.

Special thanks to our two missionaries:

Meredith “Gay” Garrett, MD, General Surgeon
Gisselle Spina, RN, OR nurse

This trip was coordinated by Jodi Grahl and Lindsay Doucette.

Local leadership, staff and support:

The dedicated staff of *Puente de Solidaridad* managed all local planning and logistics:

Patricia Vargas, PdS Executive Director
María Inés Uriona, Medical Programs Director
Marizol Mamani, Social Worker responsible for hospital and patient liaison
José Choque, Medical Supplies Coordinator
Marcela Canedo, María Eugenia Rojas & Asunción Moreo, Chaplains
Alfonso Flores, Photographer
Pablo Galindo & Verónica Castellón, Logistics

Local volunteer interpreters:

Francisco Lazaro
Dr. Sdenka Herrera Buzolic

We extend a special *Thank You!* to Rotary Club Chicago, Rotary Club Cochabamba, the Rotary Foundation, and all the Rotarians throughout the world who contributed toward the new laparoscopic facilities at Viedma Hospital.