

On June 30, 2018 we received a report on the Venezuela health care crises from a friend in Venezuela. His wife is a Resident doctor in a major hospital. This is their story. Sadly, it is the story of most Venezuelans now.

My wife got sick last week and we found out she had a swollen gall bladder. So I took her to the hospital where she works but I didn't go inside. The doctor who saw her asked her to have some tests run and I had to take the blood samples to a private clinic to get the tests run because they couldn't do them at the hospital due to the lack of supplies. When I came back to give her the lab results, I had to go into the hospital to find her and to my surprise I found a really, really filthy hospital. I've gone into hospitals many, many times, but this was really shocking to me this time because you could see how things have deteriorated and that they are not able to take care of things. Everything was filthy... not only the walls and the floors, but also the nurses' uniforms were dirty. I think it is the lack of good detergent. It's very difficult to find detergent and if you find it, it is very expensive. So people are washing their clothes with whatever they find, sometimes only water.



They have basically no supplies. Anything a patient needs, he has to go out and find at a pharmacy. There's nothing in the hospitals. Even a syringe - if you need an injection, you have to go out and buy it. Gloves - like if you need a surgical procedure, you have to buy gloves for the doctors. For instance if you're going to have a C-section, you have to go out and buy everything they need for that.

And they don't have medicines for anything - high blood pressure, diabetes, etc. My wife works in this hospital and has

2 to 3 patients die per week because they don't have any medicines. She sees patients who are diabetic or need kidney dialysis, but there is no dialysis right now. So patients are dying who could have lived if they had what was needed for them. Every day is a new tragedy. It's basically working as if they were in a war zone where there is nothing for them to work with.

You have no idea. A person who has not seen it is not capable to fully visualize it because it is shocking even to a person who lives here and is accustomed to hospitals in bad conditions, but we have gone beyond that! Public health care has never worked in Venezuela. Hospitals have always been lacking. But there was a period of time when it was better. Now it is better for a person who is sick to get the medicines and be treated at home if possible than to go into a hospital because they could get even sicker at the hospital.



And the costs are enormous. We spent about 50 million Bs (bolivars) on tests at the private clinic. To put that in perspective, right now the minimum monthly wage is 3 million Bs. So that is 15 times the minimum wage, so it is a lot of money just for tests. There is health insurance, but there is a cap on how much policies will pay and with the hyper-inflation, that maximum is reached very quickly. So if you get sick, the insurance does not pay for much.



Pharmacies are also basically empty. Some pharmacies have some medicines they've bought from Colombia and they are extremely expensive. Some people have relatives abroad who send supplies. It's a tragedy. It's a tragedy when you have a loved one who is about to die and needs medicine and they don't have it in the hospital and you go from pharmacy to pharmacy and you cannot find it because we're blocked from all sides.

And this has nothing to do with the sanctions imposed by the American government because all those sanctions are imposed on specific people - government officials - not on medical supplies or food or anything like that. The Venezuelan government is using the sanctions as an excuse for the shortage of medical supplies, but that is not the case.

Also, none of the hospital staff have been paid since January of this year. The Residents went to the hospital Director (who is a military man) and told him that if they didn't get paid, they would go on strike. But he told them if they did that, they would all be fired. These Resident doctors are all students who are working as part of their continuing studies at the University, so if they get fired, they will get kicked out of school. So they are all continuing to work without pay in hopes that they will receive their back pay at some point. And a student doctor's salary is only about 3 million Bolivars per month ---- less than \$1 at today's exchange rate.

So we ask for your prayers not just for us personally, but for our country. We can't make it without the grace and provision of the Lord. But He is faithful and He is providing for our needs as well as giving us enough to share with others.

Paz y gracias

6/30/18

Here are links to some news articles:

Article March 1, 2016 - <https://www.venezuelaawareness.com/2016/03/crisis-humanitaria-se-respira-en-el-hospital-general-del-sur-en-maracaibo-fotosvideo/>

Patients wait in the dirty corridors of the Hospital General del Sur to have their name shouted from the already broken doors. The holes in the walls make rats and cockroaches are already a common element in the landscape. The humanitarian crisis in health is breathed by the black waters that escape through the broken roofs in the different rooms. Elders, children and adults cry in despair.

José Manuel Olivares, president of the Health Subcommittee of the National Assembly new inspection tour inside the country, along with deputy Juan Pablo Guanipa, toured the floors of the institution.

"In the Laboratory there is no blood chemistry, there is no material for the procedures of immunology and endocrinology. The X-ray Unit, the mammograph and the sonogram are not working."

"The Blood Bank has no reagent for HIV and VDRL tests; the ecosonography and radiology equipment that are on the 6th floor are not used due to lack of air conditioning. In Pathological Anatomy there is no paraffin or blade to biopsy and surgeries are done if people get the materials," he explained.

3-2-18 <http://versionfinal.com.ve/ciudad/inseguridad-rodea-el-general-del-sur/>

*A doctor was assaulted with a knife on a stairway inside the hospital [General del Sur]. The relatives of the patients in the **Respiratory Care Unit**, located a few meters from the site of the attack, report that the lamps do not work. "The criminals rob you in the corridors and on the stairs of the hospital because there is no lighting."*

*"Patients cannot be taken to the hospitalization area because the elevators in the General del Sur do not work", said **Carolina Rodríguez**, president of the **Autonomous Union of Socialist Workers of Health Workers United their Similar and Related Zulia** (Sinapstrasuscezu).*



"The central pavilion is closed since July 2017, the boiler was damaged to sterilize the medical implements".

*The same situation is repeated in other medical institutions. In the **Chiquinquirá Hospital** [the one by the basilica where Dr. Ray took our team], the Central and in the Sahum, only one elevator work ; limiting the mobilization of staff and visitors, explained Parra."*

Relatives denounce that there are no supplies or food. "They only give one meal a day to the hospitalized."

4/11/18 - SICK PEOPLE IN VENEZUELA ARE TAKING DOG MEDICINE BECAUSE PHARMACIES ARE EMPTY - <http://www.newsweek.com/sick-people-venezuela-use-dog-medicine-because-pharmacies-are-empty-reports-881255>

2/15/17 - Empty pharmacy shelves - <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/empty-shelves-a-day-at-a-venezuelan-pharmacy> - (with video)

6/28/18 - Nurses strike in Venezuela - <https://panampost.com/sabrina-martin/2018/06/28/nurses-strike-in-venezuela-the-complete-collapse-of-the-healthcare-system/>