



CUBAN ASSOCIATION
OF THE
SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA

Miami, Florida, March 26th, 2010

PRESS RELEASE

**Medical Mission to the Dominican Republic Organized by
Doctors and volunteers of the Cuban Association of the Order of
Malta.**

Miami, Florida. During the weekend of March 18th to 22nd the first semi-annual medical mission of 2010 to the Hospital Manuel J. Centurion at ILAC Center, Licey al Medio medical facility in the Dominican Republic was undertaken, under the leadership of Doctors Jorge Echenique, MD and José Joaquín Centurión, MD both Knights of Malta and members of the Cuban Association, residing and practicing in South Florida. They were also under the spiritual guidance of father Fernando Heria, a Conventual Chaplain *ad honorem* of the Cuban Association.

As it has been the case for the past several years, 32 participants: doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other volunteers, including their 30 heavy duffel bags of medical supplies, flew with the collaboration of American Airlines to the Dominican Republic from Miami, Florida.

Their mission was to give medical assistance to more than 850 patients in this poor area, just a few miles outside Santiago de los Caballeros, the second largest city in the country. The doctors included specialists in cardiology, pediatric medicine, urology, dentistry and internal medicine.

They were locally assisted by the ***Cooperadores de Salud*** and other supporting staff at the clinic. Over the four day mission, the doctors saw over 850 individual patients resulting in over 2,000 patient visits. Among the patients, there were 60 women screened for cervical cancer, three breast biopsies performed, and two children scheduled for congenital heart surgery. Also, one woman was undergoing ablation for Wolf Parkinson White Syndrome. The mission Pharmacy staff distributed free of charge medicines and other medical supplies valued at over \$100,000, including a supply for the following several months.



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ILAC is a Catholic faith-based group that has a free-standing clinic near Santiago with three operating rooms and five exam rooms. ILAC has a system of health-care workers, called **cooperadores**, who live in remote villages and perform health screenings and bring surgical candidates to the clinic. It is a collaborative health care and educational organization that exists to promote the integral well-being and spiritual growth of all participants. The small hospital at this facility was made possible with a donation from a local businessman through one of the MD members of the Cuban Association.

The Order of Malta is the oldest Christian charity of the Catholic Church, having been established in 1048. Since its humble beginnings in the Holy Land, this Order and its members have dedicated themselves to serving the poor and the sick, particularly in the area of health care. This tradition of service is maintained today by the approximately 12,500 members and over 80,000 volunteers working in over 120 countries. It operates ambulance corps, blood banks, clinics, hospitals, refugee camps, and disaster relief operations. You can learn more about the Order at www.orderofmalta.org.

The Cuban Association of the Order of Malta was established in 1952. It was reorganized in Miami, Florida in 1990, where new activities were established for the poor and the elderly in cooperation with the local Catholic Church. Presently it has 113 Knights, Dames and Chaplains, including three living in Cuba. Our volunteer doctors have served the San Juan Bosco parish clinic-Our Lady of Philermo- for many years; the Cuban Association also conducts medical missions to the Dominican Republic and to other countries of the Caribbean and Central America.

We have been working closely with the Catholic Church in Cuba since 1996, currently funding forty one elderly support centers associated with a similar number of catholic parishes throughout the Island; living facilities for retired priests, hospitals and other institutions, including one which serves children suffering from Down's syndrome. We also cooperate with the Embassy of the Order of Malta in Havana with many of our local projects. You can learn more about the Cuban Association at www.ordendemaltacuba.com.

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