

Hohenau Adventist Sanitarium

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Hohenau Adventist Sanitarium (Sanatorio Adventista Hohenau or SAH) is a medical missionary institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church located in the Paraguay Union of Churches Mission (UP) territory. It is headquartered on Route 6, 38.5 km in the city of Hohenau in the state of Itapúa, Paraguay.¹

Established in 1963 in the city of Hohenau, the SAH is part of the worldwide Adventist Health System, an organization that currently has “more than 150 Hospitals and Sanitariums, 330 Clinics and Dispensaries, 80 Nursing Homes, and 16 Orphanages” spread around the world.² Its mission is to “foster physical, mental, and spiritual health, by following the example of our Lord Jesus, Doctor of all doctors.”³

In its public service, SAH offers 28 of the most requested specialties: Pediatrics, Gyneco-obstetrics, Traumatology, and General Surgery. Moreover, they have 21 hospital beds and three beds in their intensive care unit. The institution has a total of 160 staff members of whom one worker is licensed, four are credentialed missionary workers, and four are licensed missionaries. There are 63 nurses, 48 external doctors, and 10 permanent professionals.

Developments that Led to the Institution’s Establishment

Hohenau Adventist Sanitarium started in Hohenau at the beginning of 1960 through the health message that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has preached. The reputation of Asunción Adventist Sanitarium (SAA) also helped establish the founding of the SAH that, at the time, was directed by Dr. Ira E. Bailie.⁴

The idea of building a new hospital came up by the initiative of the Paraguay Mission (present Paraguay Union of Churches Mission) president, Pastor Benoní Ismael Cayrus (1917-2003). Cayrus knew that the SAA would assist people from different and distant places, such as the German descendants who were arriving from Hohenau Hills, which was more than 450 km from southwest Asunción. These German colonists wanted to have an Adventist sanitarium closer to them. Therefore, they had petitioned the Church several times to establish a hospital there because the closest medical facilities, at that time, were about 40 km from them.⁵

Faced with this request, the Church responded by pointing out that they still didn’t have enough resources to develop this project. As a result, German colonists in the German Hohenau Society who were persistently asking

for an Adventist health service then volunteered to fund the hospital construction plan. They accepted the group's support under the condition that the Church itself would own the Sanitarium because they that would operate it. After everyone agreed to these arrangements, the project got underway, and everyone started working alongside the institutions and inhabitants of the region to carry out the construction of the new hospital among the Hohenau and Obligado colonies.⁶

The Foundation of the Institution

SAH's founding had the support of many people, among them Pastor Benoní Cayrus, who at the time was president of the Adventist Church Mission in Paraguay (presently the Paraguay Union of Churches Mission). In 1962, Cayrus was responsible for seeking financial support that would subsidize the building's construction and the medical equipment.⁷ As he was organizing this, Pastor Cayrus arranged for money donations, construction materials, and a workforce among the colonists that added up to a total of 1,032 families. The Church also received three acres of land from the German Hohenau Society, represented at that time by Director Eitel Kegler. The project was also supported by the municipality of Hohenau, which contributed the machines to clear the land which, until then, was a dense forest.⁸

Thus, with their collaboration, the construction started at Route 6, 38.5 km, in the city of Hohenau in the Itapúa district so that the Hohenau society did not have to travel several kilometers to receive any medical assistance. Then, the construction of the first clinics and administration building started as well as obtaining housing for the doctors.⁹ After completing the construction, on February 2, 1963, the SAH was inaugurated with many of their medical services fully operating, and within it, the medical building was established as a cornerstone for the new campus' main structure. The Paraguay government's delegate Angel Zarza cut the entrance ribbon of the first completed building. Others were also present included Benoní Cayrus, president of the Paraguay Mission; Domingo Robledo, Encarnación mayor; and other visitors.¹⁰

History of the Institution

After its inauguration, the institution soon discovered that they needed to grow even more. An important donation made it possible for the construction of the operating room and some other houses for employees. This donation was given by the German government through the Hohenau Evangelic Church.¹¹ This contribution took place as part of the Technical and Financial Cooperation Agreement that Germany had with Paraguay.¹²

Once it was completed, the Sanitarium's first physician was Dr. Caros Drachenberg (1921-2001), who then dedicated much of his life to the service of patients that came to the Sanitarium.¹³ Pastor Basilio Zawadsky, known for his responsibility and openness in managing the Sanitarium's finances, was its first administrator. At the beginning, the institution's development was slowly developing because the facilities still had not been completed yet. However, at least 40 people were helped by the Sanitarium,¹⁴ and the patients that had serious

health problems were transferred to the city of Asunción via air transport. To improve its assistance, the Sanitarium was constantly growing through the help of missionary workers that devoted their lives to the service of God and of society.¹⁵

In February 1965, the SAH inaugurated a wing for patients needing medical assistance.¹⁶ In the same year, Dr. Drachenberg started assisting patients in his own living room and later on the Sanitarium's premises.¹⁷ During the morning, he would have appointments with patients, in the afternoon surgeries, and at night he would work in the ER. His wife Clara served as the receptionist and cashier.¹⁸ Around that time, the Sanitarium inaugurated three rooms for bed-ridden patients, an operating room, a medical office inside that room, a clinical laboratory, and X-ray facilities. In the first month of service, 264 appointments were made, four deliveries took place, and five surgeries were successfully completed.¹⁹ In the second half of the 1960s, the SAH processed a request before the Nation's Public Health Ministry so that a Nursing School could begin operating. This request was approved and, in 1970 after a few years, the first three graduates of the Auxiliary Nursing Course were granted their certificates.²⁰

In 1975, regarding the number of paramedic teams, the SAH had 26 beds, with two health professionals (a doctor and a dentist) and 33 workers who provided a variety of services.²¹ Of these employees, 14 were baptized in December of the same year by the Paraguay Mission president, Daniel Arn.²² As to its structure, in 1984, construction of the Sanitarium itself was completed.²³ At that time, the number of beds was 22, the amount of medical professionals and dentists totaled three, medical technologists and therapists were four, and the number of other workers added up to 22. In addition, during the same year the SAH Nursing School celebrated the graduation of six nursing students.²⁴

In 1996, the SAH strengthened its regular program of medical missionary activities including free medical and dental assistance that benefited the needy in the region. So the plan would take place smoothly, a team was organized that had four integrated doctors, nurses, maintenance support, and administrative staff, with chaplain Luiz Martínez responsible for spiritual support and outreach.²⁵ In 1999, due to this team's work, people of the area were interested in knowing more about the institution. This led them to often say: "We want to be like you."²⁶

In 2000, by starting a new stage in its missionary and medical outreach, the SAH had increased their services to include 23 beds, and they carried out 20,394 outpatient appointments with a total of 75 professionals. Among these were doctors, dentists, nurses, therapists, medical technologists, and others as well as the maintenance staff for the institution.²⁷

The SAH activities continued to expand, and they recently celebrated their 50th anniversary on October 23, 2013.²⁸ On this day, the SAH inaugurated the Sanitarium's ER, and premiered their new reception room, offices, and a room equipped with medical gasses and multiple paramedic monitors.²⁹ These rooms were built with the express purpose of carrying out more personalized service. Besides this, all other rooms were interconnected

with the operating room, intensive care, and conventional hospitalization to offer high quality and expedited service.³⁰

Today, the Sanitarium is known for having these highest-level support departments: Diagnostic imaging (tomography, resonance, ultrasonography, and others), clinic analysis lab service, and a 24-hour blood bank that operates all 365 days of the year. Other recent highlights included: The elaboration of the building's development master plan, completed in 2014; aiding polytraumatized patients; providing society education service; and giving assistance to disadvantaged patients. Among its services, the SAH is acknowledged for its quality nursing assistance and for its honesty and transparency in all areas. It also has a sphere of influence that extends to about 200 km in any direction.³¹

Since its foundation, the SAH has always remained located in Hohenau, Itapúa Department, Paraguay. As time passed, the colonists have built their houses located more and more near the Sanitarium.³² And now, Hohenau is a modern city known for its broad and tree-lined avenues.³³

Historic Role of the Institution

Since its origin, the SAH relationship with the Church has included developing projects that aim to fully heal the entire human being. Among these projects is the promotion of the eight remedies for a healthy life, including a healthy diet, drinking clean water, breathing fresh air, healthy exposure to sunlight, physical exercise, rest, temperance, and trust in God.³⁴ Also, the SAH has been carrying out several medical missionary projects.

Healthy cooking courses have been offered to the Hohenau population through meetings that take place in the Sanitarium's Cafeteria. This initiative has as a goal to help the community to eat healthily and open possibilities in which they may learn healthy Bible concepts from the Seventh-day Adventist community.³⁵ Furthermore, among other activities, the SAH carries out "Life and Health Fairs" in outdoor and public places. In this kind of event, the institution offers screenings for checking cardiac risks, glucose levels, and other helpful advices to all the participants. But mainly, it seeks to bring them to God through these offerings.³⁶

Later, with its mission of serving their neighbors, a SAH medical group, along with a licensed nurse and instrumentalist, participated in a humanitarian mission organized by the International College of Surgeon at the María Auxiliadora Hospital. This event was carried out on May 28-29, 2019. During this occasion, SAH doctors helped them conduct a total of 706 medical appointments from various specialties, and 55 surgeries were successfully completed in less than 48 hours.³⁷

Another humanitarian involvement of the SAH medical staff, which brought relief to the María Auxiliadora community in the district of Tomás Romero Pereira, Itapúa department, was offering biochemistry testing and services in the V Medical and Educative Assistance Program Session (PRAMED) of CILAD – Ibero-Latin American Dermatology College. This session was conducted on September 16, 2019. On that same day, simultaneously,

the SAH also held a Blood Donation Campaign in support of the Encarnación regional hospital.³⁸ These internal and external activities which the SAH conducts and participates in are examples of how this institution continues to be guided by the principals of love and service inspired by Jesus, the Doctor of all doctors.

Little more than 50 years have been passed since the SAH had opened its doors. Just as in its beginnings, the Sanitarium continues to be a Christian institution that serves society and the church to this day. The healthy lifestyle that the institution has promoted since its founding continues because it was through this kind of service that many people have come to meet Jesus. In just a few words, these efforts must continue so the SAH's original purpose may be fulfilled. Therefore, at the end, this is also a motivation for other health professionals to keep assisting warmly, caring for the patients' integral restoration and thus helps the community to continue being deeply grateful to God for the existence of the SAH.

Mission

In 2019, this institution completed 56 years of caring for the health of thousands of people. The SAH mission as a Christian Sanitarium is to establish a means of relieving diseases and sufferings in the world, starting with the closest community while developing programs that promote the physical, mental, social, and spiritual welfare of people. The Sanitarium has, as its objective, to develop the maximum moral and spiritual discernment in those they serve by seeking clearness of mind so that the people may be able to discern between good and evil, preparing for the return of Christ.³⁹

Leaders⁴⁰

General Directors: Carlos E. Drachenberg (1965-1967); Gunnar Wensell (1968); Arnold Treiyer (1969-1971); Henry Tanaka (1972-1973); Rubén Rostán Rhiner (1974-1980); Eduardo Hellvig (1981-1986); Enrique Stoletniy (1987-1994); Omar Loose (1995-1998); Aníbal Kalbermatter (1999-2004); Fredy Acosta (2005-2006); Walter Treiyer (2007-2018); Marcelo Simi (2018-present).

Medical Directors: Carlos E. Drachenberg (1965-1967); Arnold Treiyer (1969-1971); Henry Tanaka (1972-1973); Rubén Rostán Rhiner (1974-1980); Eduardo Hellvig (1981-1986); Enrique Stoletniy (1987-1994); Omar Loose (1995-1998); Aníbal Kalbermatter (1999-2004); Fredy Acosta (2005-2006); Walter Treiyer (2007-2018); Marcelo Simi (2018-present).

Administrative Directors: Basilio Zawadzki (1965-1971); R. I. Cayrus (1972-1975); Isolino Poelstra (1976-1977); Miguel A. Ibáñez (1978-1981); Jorge de la Rosa (1982-1985); David N. Gutiérrez (1986-1992); Roberto Giaccarini (1993-1998); Néstor Bernhardt (1999-2000); Favio Neugebauer (2001-2008); Arnoldo Schlemper (2009-2013); Christian Marcelo Korniejczuk (2014-present).⁴¹

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41. More information about Hohenau Adventist Sanitarium can be found on their website at <http://sah.org.py/> or in social media on Facebook: [@sanatorioADVENTISTAdehohenau](#) and YouTube: [Sanatorio Adventista de Hohenau](#).

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