



Health Living Center (CEVISA), 2019.

Photo courtesy of CEVISA Archives.

# Health Living Center (CEVISA)

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The Health Living Center (CEVISA) is a medical educational spa of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church located in the territory of Central Brazil Union Conference (UCB). Its headquarters address is Municipal Road Pr. Walter Boger Km 1,5 Mailbox 19, zip code: 13449-899. This is the road that connects the highways SP 332 (km 160) and SP 147 (Km 82) in the municipality of Engenheiro Coelho, State of São Paulo.

CEVISA is part of the world institution network of the Adventist Health System and as such is guided by the Adventist philosophy of the integral health of the human being, seeking to promote and apply the eight natural remedies and to foster health education.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, CEVISA has a built area of more than 8.000 m<sup>2</sup> comprising swimming pools, restaurant, gym, offices, and rooms dedicated to medical, therapeutic, and dental specialties. It holds 60 people comfortably, displaying more than 90,000 m<sup>2</sup> of an external area for contact with nature and for leisure.<sup>2</sup>

The specialties and treatments offered at the medical spa include: nutrition, psychology, fitness education, mud therapy, phytotherapy, hydrotherapy, physiotherapy, massotherapy, detoxification, organic detoxification, fat reduction, weight reduction, spiritual support, hypertension, diabetes, obesity, depression, anxiety, anti-stress, aesthetics, and cholesterol, all 24-hour medical follow-up. There are also programs for motor rehabilitation, anti-stress/insomnia, diabetes, and metabolic syndrome, support for those suffering from cancer, super detox, and emotional health.

## Developments Leading to Establishment of the Institution

The origin of CEVISA dates back to the mid-1980's. In 1983, South Brazil Union Conference bought the Lagoa Bonita farm which, at the time, belonged to the municipality of Artur Nogueira, state of São Paulo. The purpose of buying the farm was to build Brazil College - New Campus (IAE).<sup>3</sup> Due to the natural resources of the region, the Central Brazil Union Conference leadership saw the opportunity of installing a health institution in one part of that area, which would address certain needs and provide a prime place for its operation.<sup>4</sup> The expected Hospital Adventista de Artur Nogueira [Artur Nogueira Adventist Hospital], today CEVISA, would attend not only the region nearby, but "the community from other parts of Brazil."<sup>5</sup>

The major aim was to establish a medical institution to serve and evangelize people from satellite cities: Araras, Artur Nogueira, Conchal, Limeira e Mogi Mirim. It was also considered to prepare a structure of health focus that could, in the future, support the intended course of a medical school to be implanted at IAE, the current UNASP Campus Engenheiro Coelho, a neighbor institution to CEVISA.<sup>6</sup>

## The Institution Foundation

The land for the construction of the clinic - and the future hospital - was a donation from IAE itself to Central Brazil Union Conference. This donation took place in two stages: in the first, 60,000 m<sup>2</sup> were donated, whereas, in the second, this land was expanded to 105,000 m<sup>2</sup> overlooking two nearby lakes. The project, elaborated by Dr. Valdemar J. Wenzel, estimated 60 beds - 30 for natural medicine and 30 for conventional medicine.<sup>7</sup> The pastors in charge of the project were Darci Mendes de Borba, Central Brazil Union Conference president, between 1980 and 1993), Pável O. Moura, Secretary, and treasurers Edemar Kattwinkel and Geraldo Bokenkamp.<sup>8</sup>

As Central Brazil Union Conference had no funds, its leadership began a campaign and invited Dr. Milton Soldani Alfonso, a businessman and owner of the International Health Care Service Golden Cross, to participate. In

response, Dr. Afonso pledged to donate to the investment the equivalent sum raised from other sources. The idea was that for each cruzeiro (Brazilian currency between 1970 and 1986) donated to the Church, Dr. Milton would donate the equivalent amount. This on July 24, 1989, the foundation stone was launched. The institution remained under the status of Hospital Adventista de Artur Nogueira [Artur Nogueira Adventist Hospital] until 1991, but the work had not yet been initiated and so was not yet in operation.

Along with the foundation stone, a Bible and the book "The Ministry of Healing" were placed in a clearing amid the orange grove. After Pastor Darci Borba spoke on behalf of the Church, a deputy asked permission to speak and declared: "I am sorry, but I will disappoint you. It is the first time I have seen a hospital being built in the middle of nowhere. I look around and I see no inhabitants, no city. Therefore, my friends, all the pieces of evidence point to the failure of this project! For in my entire career as a public man, I have never seen such a thing. And yet, I am going in the opposite direction." Staring at the Central Brazil Union Conference president, he added: "I want to say to you that, thinking deep and searching in my memory for what I know, I believe in your project! I say it because I believe in the Church behind this project. This Church is trustworthy and therefore, gentlemen, this project will be a reality."<sup>9</sup>

On May 19, 1991, the region where CEVISA is located was emancipated and became part of the municipality of Engenheiro Coelho. On the same occasion, the institution received the name Centro Médico Adventista Lagoa Bonita (CEMALB) [Lagoa Bonita Adventist Medical Center].

In 1992 the building work began. At first, a 30-bed facility was built for the natural medicine treatment, with plans to raise more financial resources to proceed with the construction of the conventional medicine treatment ward. Therefore, the foundation of the ward was laid with the needed structure conditions for the future enlargement of the building, for more beds to be added later.

A few years later, in 1998, the CEMALB facility was opened, under the administration of Pastor Hélio Lehr, Doctor Eduardo Clajus and Nurse Joaquim Oliveira. Pastor Ruy Nagel (president of South American Division between 1995-2006) and Pastor Tercio Sarli (Central Brazil Union Conference president between 1994-2004) were present at the inauguration. The mission of this medical institution since its inauguration is to "promote physical, mental, social and spiritual health, following the example of the Lord Jesus, the physician of physicians."<sup>10</sup>

## History of Institution

With its equipment, CEMALB started to conduct exams such as bioimpedance, echocardiogram, electrocardiogram, electroencephalogram, ergometry, and ultrasonography, serving mainly as a collection point for laboratory tests. After some expansion work and redesign, on December 4, 2003, CEMALB was reopened as Centro de Vida Saudável (CEVISA) [Health Living Center]. During that occasion, gratitude tributes were paid to God, to the leaders of Central Brazil Union Conference, and to its major financial donator, Dr. Milton Afonso!<sup>11</sup>

Later in 2006, CEVISA began its activities as an educational medical spa, including a seven-day immersion program of natural remedies treatment. Throughout its existence, the institution received over 10,000 patients, hosting 631 treatment groups each week and an annual average of 1,500 guests, even in a time of financial crisis in Brazil.<sup>12</sup> Its leaders, from 2006 were: Mr. Andrenilson Marques Moraes (administrative director), and Dr. Helder Arco (medical director). In 2015, the federal government granted CEVISA a registration in the National Register of Health Establishments (CNES) as a non-profit entity, in recognition of the public interest and often beneficent nature of the medical work carried out.<sup>13</sup>

Despite being one of the newest institutions of Central Brazil Union Conference, CEVISA currently displays a structure of 40 rooms, two of which are presidential suites inaugurated in 2010. Furthermore, it features a fully equipped studio of Pilates and physiotherapy, swimming pools, an auditorium for 70 people, and a lounge with a capacity of 100 people. It also contains two restaurants and the most complete hydrotherapy complex in South America. Inaugurated in October 2018, this ward offers over 30 different treatments in more than 700m<sup>2</sup>.<sup>14</sup>

The treatment programs and specialties currently offered by CEVISA treat patients with a variety of physical and emotional diseases. We highlight humanized medical monitoring, which occurs throughout the treatment process. From the patient's arrival to their discharge, there is an application of nutritional knowledge, which has been acquired and tested for more than 100 years in Adventist medical institutions worldwide. There are also services of psychology, monitored-heart-rate walking, aquarobics, circuit workout, and special functional gymnastic classes. Mud therapy, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, phytotherapy, massotherapy, and, above all, spiritual support, are also offered. In addition, all the food consumed in CEVISA restaurants is organic, much of it cultivated by the institution itself.

To offer such services, the institution has a multi-professional team of 95 employees working in shifts, including three nutritionists, two audiologists, seven psychologists, three dentists, four nurses, six nursing assistants, one chaplain, two physical educators, and 10 doctors. In 2010, the service quality provided by the medical unit was recognized by the award "Mãos e Mentas que brilham." [Shining hands and minds]<sup>15</sup>

Since its foundation, CEVISA servers have sought to accomplish the institution's mission of holistic health. They help each patient in the renovation of body, mind, and relationship with God, believing this to be the path to a happy and complete life. Besides promoting several evangelistic and health activities in the region where the institution is located, they also address the needs of churches beyond the state of São Paulo offering giving lectures on medical education, through Bible preaching, practical health classes, and so forth.<sup>16</sup>

Leaders and servers of CEVISA have a clear vision of Ellen White's counsel<sup>17</sup> concerning the purpose of these types of institutions: "These institutions are the Lord's facilities for the revival of pure, elevated morality. We do not establish them as a speculative business, but to help men and women to follow correct habits of living."<sup>18</sup>

In an effort for a broad spectrum of operation, CEVISA endeavors to establish partnerships with many other SDA institutions, such as: Brazil Adventist University Campus Engenheiro Coelho, Adventist Media Center - Brazil, Adventist Natural Life Clinic, and PROASA [Adventist Health Program]. It also has partnerships with the Municipality of Engenheiro Coelho and the University of Campinas (UNICAMP), whose agreement has enabled the implementation of the CEVISA Research Center, created in 2019 to conduct research in health and lifestyle change and their health consequences. In addition, there are commercial partnerships with companies and social entities such as: Tradaq, Spatur, Spashop, Booking, Brazilian Vegetarian Society, the local media company Nogueirense, Rotary Club Campinas, Chamber of Commerce of Campinas and region, and the Brazilian Academy of Letters of São Paulo.<sup>19</sup>

## Historical Role of the Institution

The institution has sought to accomplish its mission of spreading the message of Christ's return. Over the years of its operation, several people have been baptized as a direct result of the work done. Sandra Rengifo testified: "At CEVISA, I was sure I should return to the Father's arms." Vera Tavares, after leaving the baptismal waters, said: "God was wonderful to bring me to this place so that I could reencounter Him now and forever."<sup>20</sup> Several public authorities and artists have also been received as guests at CEVISA, to whom its servers have been able to testify of the gospel.

CEVISA servers have involved themselves directly in missionary programs of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (SDA), such as: distribution of missionary books, weeks of prayer (especially the Holy Week, in a campaign called Week of Calvary),<sup>21</sup> health fairs, and small groups. These programs are developed in Engenheiro Coelho, as well as in several other municipalities in the region. Chaplaincy is also a service of constant investment, which shows the motivation to the mission of proclaiming the gospel.

As a result of the commitment to Christ maintained by the institution and by all collaborators, similar to what occurs within CEVISA itself, several baptisms have been conducted in local churches across Brazil, owing to the influence of the treatments. In this same context of contributing in every possible way to the preaching of the gospel, CEVISA often allows its premises to be used for the recording of televangelist programs of the Adventist Media Center - Brazil.

Despite being a relatively new institution, CEVISA has already become a large and high-cost operating structure, generating the huge challenge of balancing finances without losing the service quality. Even in such a scenario, CEVISA has matured and grown considerably in recent years. The clinic has become known for unifying modern conventional medicine with natural medicine. Among the challenges, one that still exists is to spread awareness concerning prevention, motivating people to get treatment before experiencing greater consequences as a result of their health problems. Likewise, it is also challenging to make the institution known to the non-Adventist audience, which has led to effective investment in marketing and advertising.

The future challenge is to deal with the effects of the national economic crisis and to achieve a stable occupancy rate of 45 patients per week. Additionally, it is necessary to invest in infrastructure for an increasingly personalized and demanding public, which is under constant reformulation. There are plans to provide new types of natural treatments so the clinic can be complete and diversified in its treatments and innovations. There is also the intent of offering the most complete check-up services to the public at the medical center, as well as providing a hospitalization plan.<sup>22</sup>

## List of Names

Artur Nogueira Adventist Hospital (1989-1991); Lagoa Bonita Adventist Medical Center (1991-2002); Health Living Center (2003-).

## List of Leaders<sup>23</sup>

Medical-Directors: Eduardo Clajus (1998); Helder Arco (2006–2009); Everton Gomes (2009–2011); Alexandre Rocha (2011–2013); Luiz Fernando Sella (2013–2015); Elson Paulozzi Nunes (2015-current).

Administrative-Directors: Hélio Lehr (1998); Andrenilson Marques Moraes (2006–2009); José Prudêncio Junior (2009–2012); Murilo Bezerra (2012–2018); Elizeu Sousa (2019-current).

Chaplains: Emerson Yamamoto (2007); André Silva (2007–2008); Ruben Freitas (2009–2011); Diego Pires Almeida (2014–2018); Evanderson Almeida (2018-current).

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## NOTES

1. Ubirajara de Farias Prestes Filho, “Territórios e Fronteiras” [Territories and Borders], *Revista do Programa de Pós-graduação em História* 6 [Journal of Postgraduate Program in History 6], January-June 2005, 172.
2. Ellen G. White, *A Ciência do Bom Viver* [The Ministry of Healing] (Tatuí: Brazilian Publishing House, 2014), 261.
3. Minutes of South Brazil Union Conference, September 15, 1983, vote no. 83-202.
4. Ibid.
5. “Hospital Adventista lança pedra fundamental” [Adventist Hospital has its foundation stone launched] *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], October 1989, 36.
6. Darci Mendes de Borba (retired pastor), interviewed by Rodolfo Figueiredo de Sousa, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, May 27, 2019.
7. Minutes of Central Brazil Union Conference, July 21, 1988, vote no. 88-238; Minutes of Central Brazil Union Conference, September 26, 1988, vote no. 88-325.
8. “Central Brazil Union Conference,” *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1989), 251; Darci Mendes de Borba (retired pastor), interviewed by Rodolfo Figueiredo de Sousa, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, May 27, 2019.
9. Darci Mendes de Borba (retired pastor), interviewed by Rodolfo Figueiredo de Sousa, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, May 27, 2019.
10. Elson Paulozzi Nunes (CEVISA Director), e-mail message to Rodolfo Figueiredo de Sousa, May 27, 2019.

11. *Conduzindo Vidas em São Paulo* [Leading Lives in São Paulo] (Tatuí, SP: Brazilian Publishing House, 2006), 97.
12. Ibid.
13. VII Central Brazil Union Conference Session Report (2014-2018).
14. Ibid.
15. "Mãos e Mentes que Brilham" [Hands and Minds that shine] award pays tribute to "men and women who contribute to the cultural and socioeconomic development of the country." Accessed on July 1, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2JPn9o5>.
16. Elson Paulozzi Nunes (CEVISA Director), e-mail message to Rodolfo Figueiredo de Sousa, May 27, 2019.
17. "Ellen White was someone of remarkable spiritual talents, who lived most of her life during the 19th Century (1827-1915). [...] the Seventh-Day Adventists believe Ellen White was much more than just a gifted writer - they believe she was chosen by God to be a special messenger, in order to draw the attention of all to the Holy Scriptures and help them to be prepared for Christ's second coming." Accessed on July 1, 2019, <https://goo.gl/imCr1P>.
18. White, Ellen G. *Medicina e Salvação* [Medical Ministry] (Tatuí: Brazilian Publishing House, 2008), 327.
19. Elson Paulozzi Nunes (CEVISA Director), e-mail message to Rodolfo Figueiredo de Sousa, May 27, 2019.
20. VII Central Brazil Union Conference Session Report (2014-2018).
21. The evangelism during the Holy Week (known as Week of Calvary) is a project of public preaching of God's Word which has been conducted in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church since 1970, aiming to recall the ministry, sacrifice, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in favor of humanity. Accessed on June 28, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2Jlk5dF>.
22. Elson Paulozzi Nunes (CEVISA Director), e-mail message to Rodolfo Figueiredo de Sousa, May 27, 2019.
23. Geovana Albuquerque (CEVISA Human Resources Secretary), e-mail message to Rodolfo Figueiredo de Sousa, May 29, 2019; Evanderson Almeida (CEVISA Chaplain), phone interview by Rodolfo Figueiredo de Sousa, June 18, 2019.

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