



Belem Adventist Hospital (Hospital Adventista de Belém) (HAB).

Photo courtesy of Belem Adventist Hospital Archives.

Belem Adventist Hospital

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Belem Adventist Hospital (Hospital Adventista de Belém, or HAB) is a medical institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and is part of the Adventist Health International Network. It operates in North Brazil Union

Mission (União Norte Brasileira, or UNB) territory, located on Almirante Barroso Avenue, 1758, Zip Code 66093-904, in Marco neighborhood, city of Belém, capital of the state of Pará, Brazil.

Currently, HAB offers its clients assistance in 50 different medical specialties.¹ It has 1,300 employees, of which 235 are doctors. In order to provide good care to patients, the hospital infrastructure has 38,000 square meters of space in its buildings, which are distributed over four blocks. The health unit has 170 hospital beds, 58 observation beds, and 11 operating rooms.² The hospital also has an advanced rehabilitation center, which offers physiotherapy in different modalities.³

In addition, HAB has a building that contains 39 doctor's offices. The institution has a clinical analysis laboratory, which offers exams of different types;⁴ a diagnostics center for image exams such as magnetic resonance, computed tomography, and others;⁵ the most modern intensive care unit in Belém, with 26 exclusive beds;⁶ and an emergency service, which assists in urgent and emergency situations 24 hours a day in the specialties of general practice, pediatrics, orthopedics, psychological consultations, and a blood bank.⁷

Developments that Led to the Institution's Establishment

In 1927, Pastor John L. Brown and his family were sent by East Brazil Union Conference (União Este Brasileira), now Southeast Brazil Union Conference, to the city of Belém, in the state of Pará, to establish the Lower Amazon Mission (Missão Baixo Amazonas, or MBA) now North Para Conference (Associação Norte do Pará, or ANPa). At that time, MBA served the current states of Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Ceará, Maranhão, Pará, Piauí, Rondônia, and Roraima. The canvassers Hans Mayr, with his wife, Johanna, and André Gedrath, were sent with Pastor Brown to work in Belém. At that time travel was only possible by boat, due to the characteristics of the region. Thus, the two canvassers built a launch that could take them to various places in order to preach the Adventist message.⁸

Pastor Brown made numerous mission trips through the states of Amazonas and Pará, distributing literature and preaching. In 1928, Brown was called to work in the South American Division headquarters. In order to continue the work of Pastor Brown, Pastor Léo B. Halliwell became his replacement.⁹ On an exploratory boat and canoe trip along in Amazon River, Halliwell was surprised by the precarious situation of people in that region. In order to help the riverside population, Halliwell made an appeal for another launch to continue the work that was being carried out. The Missionary Volunteer Society¹⁰ in the United States was willing to help financially so that this goal could be achieved. The Missionary Volunteers managed to raise US\$5,400, enough for the launch construction.¹¹ This and other achievements developed the medical missionary work of the Church in northern Brazil.

However, there were still considerable challenges. In the 1940s there were only six Adventist medical workers in all of Brazil, and most of them did not have a specialty. In response, the Adventist leaders decided to expand the

efforts of the medical missionary work along the Amazon River and its tributaries.¹² There was a great need to offer adequate treatment for serious cases that could not be solved with the basic medical work that the mission launches did with the riverside population. In addition, there was an opportunity to establish medical missionary service in the capital of the state of Pará. The Halliwells believed that medical work was the right arm of the Adventist message, and that conviction drove their efforts.¹³

Foundation of the Institution

The Halliwell's plans were reinforced in 1941 when an evaluation was made for the establishment of hospitals in South America. Pastor J. F. Wright, of the General Conference, recommended that SAD make plans to strengthen medical work in the Amazon. As a first step, in 1942, the physician Antônio Miranda, who had been called from São Paulo to Belém, established Belem Clinic (Clínica Bom Samaritano), that was the origin of Belem Adventist Hospital.¹⁴ The clinic started in a rented building, on Travessa Padre Eutíquio and offered natural treatments such as hydrotherapy.¹⁵ The medical care in the institution was carried out by Dr. Antônio Miranda (founder) and Dr. Edgar Bentes Rodrigues.¹⁶

Pastor Halliwell's plan was to build a larger medical facility. In 1942 the worldwide Sabbath School offerings were directed towards the proposed hospital, and US\$51,000 was raised for construction.¹⁷ In 1944 the union bought land in the current Marco neighborhood, in Belém, on which to build the hospital. In 1949 construction began¹⁸ when a second Sabbath School offering of US\$48,000 was dedicated to hospital construction.¹⁹ The projected building had two floors, with capacity for 45 beds, and had electricity produced by generators. The project also included a home for nurses and two homes for doctors.²⁰ The construction works lasted four years and, on April 10, 1953, the Belem Hospital (Hospital Belém, or HB) was inaugurated with 27 beds, a laboratory, pharmacy, and an x-ray room.²¹

History of the Institution

On June 2, 1958, HB signed a contract to provide services to the Bankers' Retirement and Pensions Institute (Instituto de Aposentadoria e Pensões dos Bancários, or IAPB). This institute reserved five beds in the hospital for the care of its beneficiaries. They paid the daily rates for these beds, even if they were not used. That same year, the medical archive and the hospital library were organized. In addition, internal regulations were drafted and approved by the administrative board of the North Brazil Union Mission. Also, in 1958, the hospital purchased equipment, including an x-ray machine of 100,000 amps, three new laundry machines, and the proper equipment for the emergency room.²²

During 1958 the hospital kept track of the number of medical appointments and hospitalizations at its facilities. At the end of the year, the institution had held 2,915 appointments, which made an average of around 242 appointments per month. Among the medical visits made, 623 were free and, of these, 163 were in the patient's

home. HB doctors performed 157 operations and delivered 80 babies, in addition to performing several obstetric interventions. The daily average of patients cared for in the hospital was 12, 45 percent of the 27 beds were occupied.²³ The medical institution was in its early years, but the overall picture was good and a promising future was projected.

In the 1960s Belem Hospital made great advances. The number of beds reached 40, and the services of the emergency room and blood bank were installed. Zildomar Deucher instituted the Health Guarantee Plan, and this made it possible for doctors to perform the first cardiac surgery in the northern and northeastern regions of Brazil.²⁴ During that time, scholarships were also awarded to medical students.²⁵

In 1961, Deucher was called to be the HB director and he realized the difficulty Adventist hospitals in Brazil had in getting doctors and other medical staff to work full time. He thought up a plan to encourage young Adventists to become medical missionaries, supported by the hospital. In 1969 there were 28 people involved in the student plan. The subsidy consisted of full pension, allowance, study and development assistance, and hospital practice. Beginning that year, the Belem Hospital became known as Belem Adventist Hospital (Hospital Adventista de Belém, or HAB), highlighting its identification as an Adventist institution.²⁶

In 1962, HAB completed ten years of existence and some changes took place. SAD donated an ambulance and the hospital inaugurated an emergency room. Also, a new portable x-ray device was purchased, allowing the patient to be x-rayed more quickly during surgery.²⁷ Until 1964, the hospital had four doctors, eight graduated nurses, and 16 auxiliary nurses working in its clinical staff. Meanwhile, its physical and staff structure continued to grow. On July 11, 1965, the cornerstone was laid for a new wing for the hospital, since the existing building was no longer adequate for the demand.²⁸ To contribute to the purchase of equipment for this new wing, the city government of Bonn, Germany, made a donation.²⁹ The new wing was inaugurated on March 23, 1970.³⁰ It contained 2,720 square meters of space, with 33 modern apartments, capacity for 66 beds, ten doctor's offices, and large rooms for administration.³¹

With the increase in the hospital structure and in the services provided, in the first two decades the staff numbers also increased. In 1974 HAB had 203 employees altogether, 34 workers, 11 missionary doctors, two specialists, two graduate students, and eight nurses.³² There was a need for additional qualified personnel to join the hospital staff. Thus, in 1977, the Nursing Assistant School was established in partnership with the Grão Pará Adventist Institute (Instituto Adventista Grão-Pará, or IAGP). The hospital provided the teaching staff for the institute in order to train nursing professionals educated with the Adventist medical missionary philosophy. The course was taught for 19 years, concluding in 1996. During this period, services such as the emergency room, maternity, rehabilitation sectors, and the outpatient area were also expanded, and a computer system was implemented.³³

In the following years, HAB intensified its disease awareness and prevention education with Adventist and non-Adventist audiences. From June 3 to 6, 1982, the Fourth Concílio Missionário de Obreiros (Fourth Missionary

Workers Council) was held in the city of Salinas. The theme of the meeting was *Saúde, Santificação e Serviço* (Health, Sanctification and Service).³⁴ On October 17, 1983, the spiritual department and the study center of the hospital promoted several health courses lasting two months each. These courses offered guidance on nutrition, smoking and alcohol cessation, and healthy living to the population of Belém. The event was attended by 55 people.³⁵

Beginning in May 1985, a new phase of structural expansion was initiated. Construction began on a new surgical center (with the capacity to perform several simultaneous surgeries), a sterilization center, and an adult and child intensive care center. The management chose to prioritize the purchase of modern equipment and to invest in human resources.³⁶ Two years later, the institution also began to invest in direct aid to the needy population throughout the state of Pará. Through the structural investments and social work, the missionary effort was well received. This combination of structural and evangelistic growth has become the institution's trademark. As a result of the work carried out by the hospital, 66 people were baptized.³⁷

Expansion continued and, at the beginning of 1988, the hospital acquired a new digestive endoscopy device.³⁸ The operating room was completed the following year and was named after Pastor Léo B. Halliwell.³⁹ Already, the Belem Adventist Hospital was considered the best hospital in the city, and its evangelistic strength was also successful. Between 1979 and 1990, more than 500 people were baptized as a result of the hospital's work, with 80 of these baptisms taking place in December 1990, testifying to the institution's missionary outreach.⁴⁰

In 1992 there were 60 doctors, 20 nurses, and 600 employees at the HAB.⁴¹ Many of these workers, besides saving lives in the hospital, also participated in evangelistic projects carried out in the region. In the city of Salinópolis, for example, a church was inaugurated in 1996 as a result of the work started by the hospital in 1992, when there were no Adventists in that place.⁴² Another city reached by the missionary work of the hospital staff was Santo Antônio do Tauá. On March 23, 1997, doctors and other staff members ran a program there. This event marked the beginning of Adventism in that city. An average of 150 people attended the event every day. As a result, on May 11, 1997, 59 people were baptized in Santo Antônio do Tauá.⁴³ HAB held health seminars and lectures at the Marco church, in Belém, on June 20 and 21, 1997. This program was attended by more than 800 people, causing a great impact on area.⁴⁴

In the late 1990s, the institution began to perform transplants. On May 22, 1999, the hospital was the stage for the first kidney transplant performed in the state of Pará. On September 29, 1999, it performed the first heart transplant in the northern region of Brazil. It soon began to offer refractive laser surgery to correct myopia, hyperopia, and astigmatism.⁴⁵ Other important initiatives for the development of clinical services were started in the decade of 2010. Among them, the following stand out: the Programa de Integração Acadêmica (Academic Integration Program, or PIA), which supports medical students; the Home Support Service Serviço de Apoio Domiciliar), called *Olga Streithorst Ambulatory (Ambulatório Olga Streithorst)*, which develops social programs in schools, churches, and poor neighborhoods in the metropolitan region of Belém and in the cities of Marituba

and Ananindeua; and the Healthy Living Program (Programa Vida Saudável, or PVS), which offers preventive medicine.⁴⁶

In 2003 the Belem Adventist Hospital celebrated its 50th anniversary. The hospital's birthday celebrations were held on July 11 and 13 with the presence of 200 guests. On the first day, a wing was inaugurated with 29 new offices and a waiting room.⁴⁷ A significant gesture was made on that occasion. The hospital donated 105 hectares of property to build the new Adventist institution of higher education, which was to be established in the municipality of Benevides. The property had been purchased in the 1990s to house a healthy living center. However, after the donation, the Amazonia Adventist College (Faculdade Adventista da Amazônia, or FAAMA) was built there.⁴⁸ Even sharing its resources this way, the hospital continued to expand. Four years later, on June 5, 2007, the facade of the hospital was reinaugurated and the cornerstone of a new facility was laid. The building was designed to have eight floors. Besides increasing the number of beds in the hospital to 200, the 10,000 square meters of space would be used to accommodate new surgical centers and an intensive care center.⁴⁹

In addition to planning improvements and constructing new buildings for the hospital's clinical development, the institution's leaders also made evangelistic plans. The goal was to reach people from the middle and upper classes of Belém through the chaplaincy department of the hospital. The project *Encontro Vida (Life Encounter)* was created and it began in August 2010. The first fruits came when eight people were baptized on February 26, 2012. As a continuation of this project, the hospital initiated a program of habits re-education. Around 180 people attended the event, including a family who, after finishing the course, began to study the Bible through the *Life Encounter* program. A year later they decided to be baptized. By then, 33 people had been baptized as a result of this project.⁵⁰

The year 2013 saw considerable structural expansion. The institution's new 700 square meter auditorium, with capacity for 300 people, was inaugurated. It includes a baptismal tank and some support rooms.⁵¹ That same year, the Belem Adventist Hospital had 1,030 employees and 184 beds, as well as new equipment and a qualified team.⁵² In April, the new diagnostics center was inaugurated, housing 13 sectors, divided into three centers: radiological methods and diagnostic imaging; video methods; and graphical methods.⁵³ In 2014, the institution occupied 12,000 square meters over an area of four blocks. The hospital gained a new nursing station, with an area of 950 square meters and a capacity of 22 beds, in a space named after Dr. Walter Streithorst Filho.⁵⁴ Also, the new cafeteria was opened with capacity for 160 people and including a rest area.⁵⁵

On November 16 and 17, 2014, the re-inauguration of the HAB emergency department took place and it was named after the nurse, Jessie Rowley Halliwell.⁵⁶ Also that year, HAB received level one certificate from the National Accreditation Organization (Organização Nacional de Acreditação, or ONA). At that time, only five percent of Brazilian hospitals had this certification.⁵⁷ During 2014, the hospital performed 9,000 emergency care visits per month and 50,000 exams per month in the clinical analysis laboratory.⁵⁸ In 2014 HAB and the Amazonia Adventist College (FAAMA) closed a partnership with Pará State University (Universidade Estadual do

Pará, or UEPA), authorizing ten vacancies for indicated professionals to take the professional master's degree in the area of medicine. The goal was to prepare the FAAMA professors to teach the medical course intended for that institution in partnership with HAB.⁵⁹

In early April 2017, HAB received a certificate of distinction in intensive care services. The hospital is the second institution in the country and the first in northern Brazil to achieve this certification granted by the Brazilian Association of Intensive Medicine (Associação de Medicina Intensiva Brasileira, AMIB) and by the Qualisa Management Institute (Instituto Qualisa de Gestão, or IQG).⁶⁰ On November 27, the oncology unit was inaugurated, with an area of 630 square meters, including reception, nursing wing, and infusion beds for critically ill patients. Besides that, the place allowed for the expansion of adult and child emergency care, with 19 observation beds, four resuscitation beds, nursing station, pharmacy, management rooms, and a cafeteria with capacity for 100 people.⁶¹

In commemoration of its 65 years of existence, on June 25, 2018, the Belem Adventist Hospital was honored by the Assembleia Legislativa do estado do Pará (Legislative Assembly of the State of Pará, Alepa) in a solemn ceremony. On that occasion, administrators, doctors, and patients spoke in the assembly gallery, recognizing the importance of the hospital and its services to the community of Belém and the state of Pará. During the ceremony, Alepa awarded the Ordem do Mérito Cabanagem (Order of Merit Cabanagem) medal to doctors, pastors, managers, and civil servants who provided relevant services to HAB.⁶²

Still in celebration of its 65th birthday, in August 2018, a new wing of the hospital was inaugurated. The space houses a neonatal ICU containing modern equipment and ten beds to better serve patients and companions.⁶³ The pediatric clinic has been renovated and has a playroom and balcony for access to the sun. The sterilized material center was renovated and the diagnostics center received a new reception room. The central square and parking lot have been revitalized and a new section for hospitalization was inaugurated. A new surgical center of around 1,000 square meters became operational, with 11 operating rooms allowing for operations from low to high complexity. This center has high quality technology, equipped with air with laminar flow, hemodynamics, special tables for highly complex surgeries, LED surgical lights, electrical security devices, computers and integrated operating systems, last generation monitors, a panel that allows monitoring the surgical procedure in the reception, and walls and doors that prevent radiation and favor occupational health.⁶⁴

Following the technological update process for better hospital efficiency, the digitalization of medical records was initiated, in compliance with the standards of the Sociedade Brasileira de Informática na Saúde (Brazilian Health Informatics Association). Thus, the HAB employees have access to a package of applications integrated with a central information management system. As a result, through the Vivace platform, the doctor can access the patient's test results. Even the cleaning team now has software for activity checking; thus, the service is now done more quickly. There are plans for the partograph⁶⁵ file to be entered in this digital system, so that in severe cases decisions can be made more quickly. The record of newborns will also enter this system for better

monitoring and protection of the baby.⁶⁶

While seeking to continuously improve its service structure, the HAB team of leaders and employees is also concerned with the health of those who have difficulties accessing healthcare institutions. With that in mind, as of January 12, 2019, the project *Luzeiro nas Ilhas (Light Bearer in the Islands)*, was initiated with the goal of bringing medical, dental, and basic pharmacy services to the riverside communities in the state of Pará. The project started with the departure of the Luzeiro⁶⁷ XIX (Light Bearer XIX) launch along the rivers of Belém, on the 403th anniversary of the city. Starting in the Combu Island, the Luzeiro XIX served 100 people in the categories of general practice, pediatrics, dermatology, and basic pharmacy. This project has the goal of serving 30 islands in the coming years.⁶⁸ Thus, the hospital continues to restore lives, both in Belém and also in the most distant and needy places in the state.

In honor of the 66th hospital anniversary, in April 2019, the administration launched another missionary project, called *Luzeiro Urbana (Urban Light Bearer)*. A company donated a trailer and the architectural project was done voluntarily by an architecture student. The UNB and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency International (ADRA) also collaborated. The trailer, which is six meters long and 2.25 meters wide, contains a medical and dental office, two bathrooms, and a technical area. There is also an energy generator and water storage equipment. The *Luzeiro Urbana (Urban Light Bearer)* is a place to carry out medical and dental consultations, exams, medicine delivery, and other services. The goal is to serve poor and socially vulnerable families living in the metropolitan region of Belém. Besides that, the project offers lectures on family planning, oral health, and evangelistic messages. The first visits were made in the cities of Ananindeua and Belém, in the Marco, Icoaraci, and Benguí neighborhoods.⁶⁹

In 2019, the Belem Adventist Hospital was the first hospital in Brazil to receive the diamond level certification for distinction in intensive care services. The award was given by the Brazilian Association of Intensive Medicine (Associação de Medicina Intensiva Brasileira, or AMIB) and by the Qualisa Management Institute (a health services accreditation body). In addition, due to the good results achieved by HAB regarding treatment for sepsis, the Latin American Sepsis Institute (Instituto Latino-Americano de Sepse, or ILAS) has awarded it a Certificate of Distinction as recognition for the treatment with high performance and resolvability of the disease at the hospital.⁷⁰

Historical Role of the Institution

HAB is among 172 Adventist hospitals spread across the world and has had a major influence in the northern region of Brazil when it comes to promoting comprehensive health. In addition to its success in the clinical field, the institution has been highlighted for its missionary commitment. Since its establishment, the hospital has collaborated to create around 100 Adventist congregations in the city of Belém and in its metropolitan area,⁷¹ making a notable contribution to evangelization and church planting. From 1979 to 1988, the medical unit led

378 people to baptism. On the occasion of its 40th anniversary, the average number of baptisms linked to the institution was one person per day. Furthermore, since 2010, the hospital chaplaincy has led a congregation called *Encontro Vida (Life Encounter)*, which, in the first four years, baptized 118 people.⁷²

The institution has also contributed in the social sphere. The Olga Streithorst Social Assistance Ambulatory is located in one of the most populous neighborhoods in Belém and works as an extension of HAB in order to assist the needy in the community. In order to carry out permanent social work, in 2003 the hospital created the *Programa Criança Cidadã (Child Citizen Program)*.⁷³ Until 2013, approximately 2,000 pediatric and dental consultations were carried out per month under this project.⁷⁴ In addition, HAB has been actively engaged in projects promoted by the Adventist Church, among them *Vida por Vidas (Live for lives)*⁷⁵ and *Quebrando o Silêncio (Breaking the Silence)*.⁷⁶ Thus, whether through its own initiatives or through partnerships, HAB has sought to realize its institutional vision of promoting the integral health of human beings.⁷⁷

Outlook

The Belem Adventist Hospital has been fulfilling the evangelistic and humanitarian objectives that characterize the Adventist medical work and that inspired its creators more than six decades ago. Currently, the medical unit seeks to achieve the HIMMS Analytics Level 7, in order to become a fully digital hospital, without the use of paper. Thus, the institution has already purchased 27 software programs that are used by customers and employees. Through this and many other efforts, HAB has remained a leading medical institution in northern Brazil. Its mission, however, remains the same as it was in the beginning. Its main purpose remains “to promote physical, mental, social, and spiritual health, following the example of the Lord Jesus, the Chief Physician.” In keeping with that purpose, it will continue to seek medical excellence offered in the medical missionary context. Thus, managers and employees continue to be guided by divine guidelines.⁷⁸

Official Names

Hospital Belém (Belem Hospital) (1953-1969); Hospital Adventista de Belém (Belem Adventist Hospital (1969-present).

List of Leaders⁷⁹

Administrative Directors: Leon Harder (1953-1956); Benito Kalbermatter (1956-1957); Claudomiro Fonseca (1960-1961); Wilson F. Ávila (1962); Nicanor Reichembach (1963-1967); Isaías Andrade (1967-1968); Jurandir R. de Oliveira (1971-1972); Wolfgang von Maack (1972-1973); Milton Gressler (1974-1978); Irineu Stabenow (1978-1995); Cleo O. Fortes (1995-1997); Sidney G. Matos (1997-2000); Alipio B. Rosa (2000-2008); Clairton Oliveira (2008-2010); Vander Alves (2010-2014); Jackson S. Freira (2014-present).

Medical Directors: Elmer Bottsford (1953-1955); Günther Ehlers (1955-1956); Oséas Florêncio (1956); Russell T. Smith (1956-1957); Jetro Carvalho (1958-1961); Fernando Guimarães (1961-1962); Zildomar Deucher (1962-1966); Clemenceau de Jesus Lopes (1966-1967); Zildomar Deucher (1967-1972); Daniel J. dos Reis (1972-1973); Renê Gross (1974-1976); Alaor Jose Toledo (1977-1984); Merari Reinert (1985-2002); Walter Streithorst Filho (2002-2012); Markus Barcellos de Albuquerque (2012-present).⁸⁰

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80. More information about HAB can be found on the website www.hab.org.br or on social networks - Facebook: @hospitalbelem, Instagram: @hospitalbelem.

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