

Adventist Natural Life Clinic and Spa

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Aerial View of

Adventist Natural Life Clinic & Spa

Photo courtesy of Adventist Natural Life Clinic & Spa Archives.

The Adventist Natural Life Clinic and Spa (CAV) is an institution that is part of the Adventist Health System, located in the territory of the Central Brazil Union Conference (UCB). The goal of this clinic is to offer specialized programs for disease prevention and health recovery through lifestyle education.¹

CAV operates at the address Estrada dos Venâncios, no number, ZIP Code 18150-970, in the neighborhood Carmo, in the city of São Roque, State of São Paulo, Brazil.

The programs offered by the clinic are prepared according to both individual and collective needs. Based on the eight natural remedies—healthy eating, regular water intake, fresh air, breathing, exposure to sunlight, exercise, rest, temperance, and trust in God—the clinic offers functional and therapeutic gastronomy, massotherapy with essential oils, clay treatments, full fitness program, physiotherapy, chirotherapy, herbal therapy, psychotherapy, educational lectures, and spiritual counseling.

In order to ensure the execution of its natural programs in a suitable location, the clinic has an area of 252 thousand m² surrounded by nature. This area is full of cozy accommodations such as ten chalets, 12 apartments, three master suites, a new treatment complex with a gym, heated pool, leisure area, multisport gym, hydrotherapy environments, massage therapy, an art therapy studio, and a space for child care.

Natural life programs address the needs arising from the following problems: high cholesterol, intoxication, stress, hypertension, chronic pain, diabetes, obesity, depression, smoking, and alcoholism. In addition, the clinic offers natural medicine, with activities such as hydrotherapy, mud therapy, physiotherapy, massotherapy,

aesthetics, chiropractic, lymphatic drainage, and modeling massage. The daily health care of the institution is carried out by 110 servers, 32 of which integrate the medical team. Up to 60 patients are treated every day. The institution's staff consists of 4 doctors, 5 nurses, 2 physiotherapists, 1 chiropractor, 2 nutritionists, 2 physical trainers, 2 psychologists, and 14 massage therapists.

Developments That Led to the Establishment of the Institution

For some years the leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church planned to build a clinic of natural treatments in the state of São Paulo. The searches for a suitable location began in 1979. Until 1980 the extensive metropolitan region of Sao Paulo had only one Adventist health institution, Sao Paulo Adventist Hospital (HASP), which operates with a proposal for urban context, since it is located in a very populated region²

For Ellen G. White the denomination must always be aware of the opportunities to buy properties away from the big cities.³ Based on this concept and, considering that the only Adventist medical institution in the state of São Paulo was Sao Paulo Adventist Hospital, the Adventist Church leaders in that region realized the need to broaden the possibilities of Adventist medical care. From the beginning the idea was to offer options for preventive medicine and natural treatment away from the big centers and all the stress they cause, increasing the possibilities of restoration and the formation of good habits leading to a change of lifestyle⁴

The first plans for the establishment of the new institution received the attention of Dr. Manfred Krusche, who at the time was the clinical director of the Adventist Hospital São Paulo, the financial administrator João Lotz, Pastor João Wolff, and the pastoral couple Sidionil and Elisa Biazzi.

Founding of the Institution

The intention of the workers involved in the creation of the clinic was to find a proper place for the development of natural treatments. In 1979, when those interested in the project sought out building plots for the institution, every weekend at least one worker would go out looking for places that would be suitable for the construction. At the end of that year, at the administrative board meeting of Sao Paulo Adventist Hospital, Pastor John Wolff mentioned the existence of a place called the Pro-Vita Climate Resort, which was being offered to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁵

During that meeting John Wolff explained that he had received a letter from a lady named Dorotéa Hanser. In the letter she reported the sale of her property in the city of Sao Roque, where there was the Pro-Vita Physical Therapy Institute. This lady had recently become a widow and, because she could no longer run the institution alone, she decided to put it on sale for Cr\$ 12,000,000 (about US\$ 1,066.41). In the days following the meeting of the administrative board, several workers visited the Pro-Vita Climate Resort, recognizing it as an ideal place for the creation of the new Adventist clinic. In addition to being in a quiet place, the property had an area of 62,000

m², with a built area of 2,200 m².⁶

On December 8, 1980,⁷ the purchase of the medical institution was formalized. Among other factors, the city of Sao Roque was chosen to house the clinic because it offered the necessary conditions for carrying out the treatments planned by the founders of the institution—the so-called “divine methods for diseases treatment.”⁸ The amount needed to buy the property was raised through the special offerings from supporters of the project and the Seventh-day Adventist administrative organizations.⁹

Thus, the clinic was founded on December 14, 1980. Since then its headquarters has been in operation in the municipality of Sao Roque, 62 km away from the city of Sao Paulo. Due to the name of this city, the clinic became known as Sao Roque Adventist Clinic. Its objective was to act through natural agents, primarily in the area of prevention and treatment of noncommunicable diseases, with emphasis on outdoor exercise, hydrotherapy, physiotherapy, and adequate food. “All of this, added to the other resources of conventional medicine,” would combine to the missional purpose of healing and salvation.¹⁰

The target group of the clinic were patients with “chronic diseases in general and cases of stress, respiratory disorders, circulatory disorders, insomnia,” among others. More complex cases, such as “acute cases and major surgeries,” should be referred to the Sao Paulo Adventist Hospital, as the clinic could not offer support for these types of treatment.¹¹ In the beginning Doctors Manfred Krusche, Antônio Ângelo Lovisio, Hildemar F. dos Santos, and João Lotz participated actively as the first leaders (medical team and board personnel). The initial project of the institution was supported by Pastors Wolff and Biazzi, who were then, respectively, president of the South Brazil Union Conference (USB)¹² and Sao Paulo Conference (AP) Health Department.

History of the Institution

In the decade of 1980, about twenty employees cared for an average of 7 to 20 patients a day. The variation in number of patients would happen according to seasonal variations. A decade later Sao Roque Adventist Clinic became known as the Adventist Natural Life Center and already had 27 rooms and expanded physiotherapy and hydrotherapy sectors. In addition to these, the construction of a heated swimming pool, a chapel, and a multisports gymnasium were also added. Later the clinic had its name changed to Natural Life Space and shortly thereafter to Adventist Natural Life Clinic.

Over the years many patients with different stories and health problems have been through the clinic and, in some way, were part of the institution's history. In 1993 the *Revista Adventista* published a summary of one of these stories. It happened that Salete Flor, a member of the New World SDA Church in Goiânia, had cancer. With no hope of healing through conventional medicine, she prayed to God and sought the Adventist clinic in the city of Sao Roque, where she was an inpatient for 15 days. Upon returning home she continued to follow natural treatments and was soon cured.¹³

On another occasion the *Revista Adventista* (Adventist Review) published the story of Doctor Sandra Armada dos Reis, a native of Angola. She was operated on because of a thyroid tumor that almost got her killed. After searching the clinic, she treated herself and was healed. However, a month later Sandra returned to the institution, this time because of a brain tumor. In 2010, during the clinic's anniversary, she received homage and reported her experience, saying "besides the love of all of you (clinic staff) and the faith I have, I know that God will perform a miracle on me."¹⁴ This anniversary took place on December 12 and was celebrated with a Thanksgiving service and a buffet. About two hundred people were present, including leaders, employees, guests, and patients.¹⁵

On February 9, 2013, the clinic was featured in a television report by Rede Bandeirantes— one of the broadcasters of national prominence. The interview showed the decision of people who looked for a quiet place to take care of their health in February (which is a period usually dedicated to Carnival), thus choosing to leave the agitation aside. These patients preferred to take advantage of the recess period to recover their energies through a healthy lifestyle that was provided by the clinic.¹⁶

The institution has experienced good structural development over the years. Between 2004 and 2018, the clinic received an addition of 190,000 m² of land and 10 chalets, 12 apartments, 3 master suites, and a new treatment complex with gym, heated swimming pool, leisure area, and multisports gymnasium. Spaces have been created for art therapy and child care, as well as an emporium for the sale of natural products—free from agrochemicals and oil-derived fertilizers. During this period the clinic also underwent expansion in the hydrotherapy and massotherapy rooms.¹⁷ This renovation was fully supported by the Sao Paulo Conference (AP) and opened the way for a new institutional name, this time to Adventist Natural Life Clinic and Spa—which occurred in February 2018.

Later a more modern kitchen was acquired for the clinic. This kitchen had customized natural menus, cafeteria, massage room, reception with exquisite architecture, organic garden, orchids garden, appropriate landscaping, a sector for the elaboration of top quality medicinal products, and a series of products based on natural plant oils and their organic derivatives.

The solidity of the Adventist Natural Life Clinic and Spa is the result of a journey started on times when it was hard to introduce a natural treatment philosophy in Brazil. At that time such methods were viewed with discredit in the scientific community. Another difficulty faced by the clinic leaders was the location of the institution, 60 km away from the city of Sao Paulo. This became an obstacle in the beginning, as it made access difficult for some people. In addition to these, many other challenges were faced. However, because the leaders followed the divine guidelines, the establishment grew and conquered its space. Finally, it is interesting to highlight that in the beginning of 2018 the institution's new facilities were inaugurated, which then had the capacity to care for 60 patients a day.

Historical Role of the Institution

The Adventist Natural Life Clinic and Spa has helped greatly in the spreading of the gospel through the health message. In reality, its influence extended beyond the State of Sao Paulo to reach the entire country of Brazil, and even across other countries. In 1993, in the Revista Adventista (Adventist Review), Dr. Hildemar Santos, medical director of the clinic at the time, spoke about a patient who always looked for the Sao Roque Adventist Clinic when she needed treatment or had any questions regarding health. One day this patient's daughter was in Tokyo, Japan, and had a health problem. The mother promptly turned to the clinic, seeking to solve her daughter's problem, who was on the other side of the globe. The clinic staff then assisted in the solution of the problem by referring her to the Tokyo Adventist Hospital.¹⁸

Currently the clinic's personnel coordinates an elderly care program through lectures, clinical care, and hospitalization in the community of São Roque. These employees work with teenagers with themes related to the prevention of drug use, sexually transmitted diseases, and early pregnancy. About twelve thousand teenagers a year are reached through this project. In addition, since 2013 clinic leaders have annually promoted the Congresso Nacional de Estilo de Vida, Missão e Cura (National Lifestyle Congress, Mission and Healing). This congress welcomes interested people and health professionals from Brazil and other countries. The clinic also serves the surrounding community with a lifestyle medicine program called Restaurando Saúde (Restoring Health).

This institution has always been in compliance with national laws. Therefore, on October 9, 2014, an important regulatory milestone was the attainment of the National Registry of Healthcare Establishments (CNES)--certification that recognizes the public interest and charitable nature of the institution in serving the population. After receiving this certification, the clinic started to receive students from the River Plate Adventist University, located in Argentina, in addition to doctors from other institutions, to do an internship on its premises.

In general, the clinic is remembered by its patients for the good services provided by the multidisciplinary team which, in turn, links natural treatment to spiritual assistance. Daily, guests of the institution participate in a therapy coordinated by the chaplain pastor. This therapy culminates on Saturday with a big celebration. Among the baptisms carried out as a direct result of the clinic's influence, that of Ms. Cacilda Carvalho stands out, because after seeking treatment at the institution, she again had contact with the Bible message and decided to give her life completely to God.¹⁹

Future Outlook

The mission of the Adventist Natural Life Clinic and Spa is to “cooperate to restore the physical, mental, and spiritual health of its clients, teaching and promoting healthy habits to prevent diseases through Lifestyle Medicine and by providing memorable experiences.”²⁰

In its almost forty years of existence, the clinic's leaders have not lost focus but continue to pursue their goals. These leaders understand that "there are many challenges ahead. The purpose is to lead the Adventist Natural Life Clinic and Spa, according to the pioneer's dream, to consolidate itself as a Lifestyle Medicine institution, while being proactive in fulfilling the urgent mission of healing and saving."²¹

In order for the clinic to continue to achieve good success, the leaders of the clinic will seek to continue representing the institution's philosophy well and providing an excellent service to its clients, marking lives with good memories by providing well-being and healing. In addition, they will also seek to continue improving the treatments offered, expand the borders to reach more people, and modernize the institution's structure and service environments.

Finally, beyond the services currently provided, the institution's board is planning to offer many others. Examples are: specialized care in geriatrics, sleep and pain therapies, the organization of a cardiovascular and orthopedic rehabilitation center, the expansion of the spa, where part of the services provided by the clinic will be offered quickly and regularly to people overwhelmed by the daily routine of large urban centers. The search for growth shows that the servers of the clinic have been striving to achieve success in their medical-missionary mission.

List of Names

Sao Roque Adventist Clinic (1980,1981); Adventist Natural Life Center (1981,1982); Natural Life Space (1982-2004); Adventist Natural Life Clinic (2004-2018); Adventist Natural Life Clinic and Spa (2018-current time).

List of Leaders ²²

Presidents: Osmundo G. dos Santos (1980); Roald M. Wensel (1981); Walter J. Streithorst (1982-1983); Darci M. De Borba (1984-1994); Tercio Sarli (1995-2003); Sidionil Biazzzi (2004-current time).

Medical directors: Manfred Krusche (1980-1986); Hildemar F. dos Santos (1987-1993); Antonio A. Lovizio (1993-1994); Manfred Krusche (1995-2018); Benicio Thomas Pereira (2018-current time).

Administrators: Elisa Biazzzi (2015-current time).²³

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NOTES

1. *Adventist Natural Life Clinic*, accessed on September 3, 2018, <https://www.vidanatural.org.br/>.
2. Edvaldo Rodrigues and Gilmar Batistoti, "O trabalho desenvolvido na Clínica Adventista de São Roque" [The work developed in the Adventist Natural Life Clinic] (Monography, Brazil College, 1990), 10.
3. Antônio Roberto Ambrosio, "Clínica Adventista de São Roque" [Adventist Natural Life Clinic] (Monography, Brazil College, 1986), 7.
4. According to the Brazilian Institute of Lifestyle Medicine (IBMEV), "Lifestyle Medicine is a clinical practice based on scientific evidence, where changes in lifestyle (such as physical activity, nutrition, stress management, and human connection) are used to prevent, treat, and even

reverse the progression of chronic diseases - with a focus not only on the consequence but the cause of the problem." Accessed on September 3, 2018, <http://ibmedicinadoestilodevida.org/>.

5. Ibid., 5-6.
6. Ibid., 6-7.
7. "Clínica Adventista Vida Natural completa 30 anos" [Adventist Natural Life Clinic turns 30]. Portal guia-me [Guide me Website], December 16, 2010, accessed on September 3, 2018, <https://goo.gl/V2fbam>.
8. Antônio Roberto Ambrosio, "Clínica Adventista de São Roque" [Adventist Natural Life Clinic] (Monography, Brazil College, 1986), 5.
9. "Em São Paulo, novo hospital: agora, só para tratamentos naturais" [In Sao Paulo, new hospital: now, only for natural treatments], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], March 1980, 24-25.
10. Ibid.
11. "Conhecendo nossas instituições. Clínica Adventista de São Roque" [Knowing our institutions. Sao Roque Adventist Clinic], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], May 1982, 35.
12. Edvaldo Rodrigues and Gilmar Batistoti, "O trabalho desenvolvido na Clínica Adventista de São Roque" [The work developed in the Adventist Natural Life Clinic] (Monography, Brazil College, 1990), 10.
13. "Foi curada por milagre" [She was miraculously cured], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], September 1993, 19.
14. "Clínica Adventista Vida Natural completa 30 anos" [Adventist Natural Life Clinic turns 30], Portal guia-me [Guide me Website], December 16, 2010, accessed on September 3, 2018, <https://goo.gl/V2fbam>.
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17. Isadora Schmitt Caccia, "Clínica Adventista Vida Natural constrói novas instalações" [Adventist Natural Life Clinic builds new facilities], *Adventist News*, January 17, 2013, accessed on November 29, 2018, <https://goo.gl/hZcM7M>.
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19. Joyce Araújo, "Clínica Adventista realiza batismo" [Adventist Clinic celebrates baptism], *Adventist News*, March 30, 2017, accessed on November 29, 2018, <https://goo.gl/kj4F>.

20. "Missão, Visão e Valores" [Mission, Vision and Values], *Adventist Natural Life Clinic & SPA*, accessed on September 3, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2xg9A9c>.
21. Ibid.
22. "The South American Division," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, d.c.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1981), 261; "Adventist, Natural Life Clinic," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018), 589. For a more detailed visualization of all presidents, secretaries, and administrators, see the Yearbooks from 1981 to 2018.
23. For more information about the Adventist Natural Life Clinic, access the website: vidanatural.org.br, or the social media – Facebook and Instagram: @clinicaespavidanatural; and Youtube: Adventist Natural Life Clinic.

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