



Porto Alegre Adventist Clinic.

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Porto Alegre Adventist Clinic

LUVERCY PENEDO FERREIRA, AND RENATO GROSS

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Porto Alegre Adventist Clinic (CAPA) is a medical institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, located in the South Brazil Union (USB). Its goal is to provide people with a holistic and healthy lifestyle. Its headquarters is located at Matias José Bins, 581, 91330-290, in the Três Figueiras neighborhood, in the city of Porto Alegre, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

The clinic currently has 26 employees and interns, 36 doctors, and 11 therapists providing services.¹ The medical staff provides services to the metropolitan region of the state capital and to the entire state of Rio Grande do Sul. It offers medical consultations, therapies, diagnostic tests, and medical procedures in more than 30 specialties in 15 consulting offices.

The specialties offered by the Clinic are: laboratory analysis, cardiology, cardiovascular surgery, general surgery, plastic surgery, clinical medicine, coloproctology, dermatology, echocardiography, endocrinology, physiotherapy, speech therapy, gastroenterology, geriatrics, gynecology and obstetrics, family medicine, occupational medicine, neurology, nutrition, ophthalmology, orthopedics, otolaryngology, clinical pathology, pediatrics, psychology, psychiatry, rheumatology, ultrasound, and urology.²

Developments That Led to the Establishment of the Institution

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has emphasized and enabled holistic health principles since its beginning. Adventist pioneers in South America brought medical care and health principles to those they served. "Since they began their activities in Brazil, the Adventists' concern with medical services, [one] of the main ways of 'preaching about Christ's Return', has given rise to numerous hospitals (such as Silvestre, in Rio de Janeiro), Clinics, and service to indigenous populations (since 1928 Adventists have had contact, for example, with the Carajás of the Araguaia river), and the riverside populations of the São Francisco, Araguaia and Amazonas through medical missionary launches [...]."³

The origins of Adventist medical work in Rio Grande do Sul dates back to 1904, in the city of Taquari. Dr. Abel L. Gregory opened a medical clinic, with the Missionary Academy and the Brazil Publishing House. It is said that

the doctor's busy schedule kept him busy until late at night. Sometimes he could only have lunch close to bedtime. 'Many times,' he revealed, 'I feel too tired to study and I go to sleep right after eight.' Instead of complaining about the excessive demands of the job, he was looking for ways to improve his services. When observing the poor state of the teeth of Brazilians and the indulgent laws that regulated dental practice, he also started to work as a dentist, equally dividing his time with medical practice.⁴

However, for unknown reasons, this clinic was closed in 1909⁵

In 1920 Pastor John Lipke returned to the United States to study medicine at the College of Medical Evangelists of Loma Linda. He had already led the creation of the boarding schools of Gaspar Alto and Taquari, as well as the Adventist publishing in Brazil, and dreamed of starting medical work there. Upon his return in 1926, he took up residence and established clinics successively in the cities of Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre, Taquara, and Ijuí⁶ Thereafter "he began to practice medicine in a particular way, limited to the terms of the state license, not a valid recognition for the whole country [...]." However, "the workers wanted a sanatorium." They visited President Getúlio Vargas to present their plans, which at the time did not advance.⁷

Still in the 1920s, in Taquara, the Bergold family, "impressed by our health principles [...] decided to maintain on their own a hospital for the administration of hydrotherapy and [other] natural treatments." The hospital operated until 1928, when the property was sold in order to establish Cruzeiro do Sul Adventist Academy⁸

Dr. Galdino Nunes Vieira made another important contribution to the beginnings of medical missionary work in Rio Grande do Sul and in Brazil. He was a reviewer and consulting physician for the *Vida e Saúde* [Life and Health Review] for many years. He worked in the Silvestre and Health House Liberdade hospitals. in São Paulo. He highlights in his memoirs that he had made plans to build an Adventist hospital in the territory of Rio Grande do Sul⁹

At his request, the "director of Caixa Econômica Federal, Dr. Silon Rosa, former governor of the state, [...] donated 20 contos de reis [approximately R\$ 400,000.00 (US \$ 6,150.00)], an importance that at that time represented a large amount." It is said that "precisely at this time, inflation assumed gigantic proportions, which led the government to devalue every 'thousand réis' [currency of the time] by changing its name to *cruzeiro*; *um conto de réis*, which was a thousand times the currency unit, became worth a *cruzeiro*." This devaluation wiped out the existing fund at ASR that would go to the hospital.¹⁰

In Porto Alegre, in 1944, at the initiative of Rio Grande do Sul Conference president Jerônimo Granero Garcia, the clinic O Bom Samaritano was established.¹¹ It operated at the back of the Central Church, on Rua Gal Vitorino. Its first doctor was also the church leader, Pastor Siegfried Hoffmann.¹² In 1950, the clinic already had the collaboration of Dr. Galdino Nunes Vieira.¹³ There is evidence that he was the first Adventist physician in Rio Grande do Sul, with Dr. Hoffmann second. The average number of patients seen at this clinic was always 20 to 30 people a day, and minor surgeries were performed sporadically.¹⁴ The service was free, but those who could afford it contributed according to their ability. In 1952, o Bom Samaritano had already served about 5,500 people.¹⁵ Subsequently, the clinic was run by Doctors Elias Morsch and João Kiefer Filho.

The Institution's Foundation

After repeated attempts to establish a clinic in the south of the country, in 1989 the church was able to plant a clinic in Porto Alegre using funds from the 13th Sabbath offering.¹⁶ The amount collected was equivalent to US\$80,000.00,¹⁷ enabling the long-dreamt of clinic to proceed.

With the addition of this offering to the joint efforts of the South Brazil Union, through its administrators, President Rodolpho Gorski and Treasurer Adolpho Reis; and Rio Grande do Sul Conference, through President Ivanaudo Barbosa and Treasurer Vilson Keller; and with the support of Dr. João Kiefer Filho, Ivan Souza, and Pastor David Moróz,¹⁸ the project moved forward. On March 2, 1989, the Adventist Health Center opened.

At the time the clinic had 6 consulting offices and 30 professionals, who attended various specialties, offering physiotherapy services, laboratory analysis, ultrasounds, ergometric testing, and a room for small procedures. After a few years of operation, a new department was created called Health Center, with the aim of teaching the Adventist

health message.¹⁹

History of the Institution

Around 1996, the clinic had 6 offices, in addition to a surgical center, a post for collecting laboratory exams, a recovery room, and a meeting room with a capacity for up to 40 people. The clinic offered medical care in about 20 specialties, including dermatology, gastroenterology, neurosurgery, neurology, and orthopedics. The Institution had a team of 20 professionals, two of whom were workers, in addition to 18 employees.²⁰ In 1996 the Adventist Health Center was renamed Porto Alegre Adventist Clinic. Its headquarters remained in the same location and its area covered 1,200 square meters.

In 2012 the clinic already had a staff of 23 employees, 53 medical service providers, and nine therapists in the same category.²¹ The missionary commitment continued to be expressed in evangelistic initiatives. There clinic has sought to take advantage of all possible opportunities to carry out medical missionary work, using different methods.

On April 7, 2013, World Health Day,²² the clinic joined forces with the Health Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the central region of Rio Grande do Sul, in an event held “with the aim of taking a series of services to residents of the Rubem Berta neighborhood. “ Clinic professionals performed blood pressure and glucose tests, verified body mass indexes, and offered psychological assistance.²³

In 2015 Viamão Adventist Academy held a health fair, promoting the eight natural remedies, in partnership with Porto Alegre Adventist Clinic.^{24 25} 250 people were treated in three hours, with some accepting the offer of Bible studies. The following year, Adventists in Esteio, in Rio Grande do Sul, took advantage of the conclusion of the Hope Impact⁶ project to promote a health race. The clinic contributed to the event, with the participation of some of its doctors and nurses.²⁷

On October 27-29, 2017, the clinic set up a stand offering information, advice, and health tests at a book fair²⁸ The clinic participates in this and other events with the purpose of evangelizing, promoting medical missionary work and helping people.

In 2014, Curitiba Adventist Clinic and Porto Alegre Adventist Clinic underwent an important change in their organizational structures. As they are both in the missionary territory of the South Brazil Union, the two clinics now have a unified administration.²⁹ As of 2016, the two clinics have 295 professionals engaged in patient care and other functions, of which 120 are specialist doctors. They provide medical care for more than 100,000 patients a year.³⁰

Historic Role of the Institution

Over its 30 years of medical missionary work, Porto Alegre Adventist Clinic has worked on social projects in schools, neighborhoods, and even in other countries. The clinic has reached and influenced many people to change their lifestyle habits, teaching them the importance of valuing health and applying the eight natural remedies for disease prevention.

The institution’s leaders believe that the clinic’s area of influence needs to be much broader than the region in which it is located. They strive for the institution to contribute not only in the city and region where it is located, but also in other parts of the world through projects and missions. In September 2014, Porto Alegre Adventist Clinic and Curitiba Adventist Clinic supported a missionary project in the Philippines, allocating resources for the construction of a medical center on site. They also subsidized medical treatments and purchased necessary drugs.³¹

Outlook

The Porto Alegre Adventist Clinic is located in the region with the highest concentration of Adventists in the state, with large churches, two conference headquarters (Rio Grande do Sul and Central Rio Grande do Sul), several Adventist schools, *Espaço Novo Tempo* [Hope Center of Influence] and *Espaços Vida e Saúde*.

Over three decades, the clinic has saved many lives, restored health, and impacted families for good. The Porto Alegre Adventist Clinic is charged with the mission of saving and transforming lives, and it has sought to fulfill this mission with faithfulness. Its aim is to continue providing quality care to patients, sharing the love of God with all who need physical, mental, and spiritual health.

List of Names

Adventist Health Center (1989-1996); Porto Alegre Adventist Clinic (1997-current).

List of Leaders

Medical Director: João Kiefer Filho (1989-present).

Managing Director: Ivan Batista de Souza (1989); Waldomiro Klu (1989-2003); Levi Mateus Pereira Viegas (2004-2008); Jair Reis Bezerra (2008); Marcos Enoch da Silva (2009-2013); Altiery Kämpel (2014-current)³²

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