



PUTTING PATIENTS FIRST:

How Altra Medic Hospital in Guatemala Overcame Medication Challenges for Safer Patient Care

At QUAD A, we adhere to a simple philosophy: **Patients First. Always.** This commitment reflects our global approach to healthcare standards and principles. No matter where you are in the world, patients should have access to high-quality healthcare.

In addressing the complexities of healthcare delivery, one major challenge arises concerning the availability of essential medications. This is a universal concern, but it manifests uniquely in different regions, as seen in the case of Altra Medic Hospital in Guatemala City, Guatemala, with the drug, Dantrolene.

More generally, it is crucial to understand the broader context: poor access to essential medicines and healthcare contributes to higher mortality rates. According to UNICEF, in 2019, approximately 5.2 million children under five died globally, with the majority of these deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries. It should be noted that basic healthcare and medications could have prevented many of these deaths.

How can an organization such as ours accredit facilities that may not have critical rescue drugs such as Dantrolene, no matter the reason? In our commitment to delivering patient safety, QUAD A works extensively with clinics seeking accreditation to establish alternative equivalent practices, especially in regions facing challenges in obtaining essential medications.

Dantrolene, a critical rescue drug used to counteract malignant hyperthermia, a potentially fatal condition that demands a swift and precise response from the facility to stabilize the patient, is central to our accreditation process. Unfortunately, this vital medication may not even be readily available in Guatemala's main hospitals.

Altra Medic Hospital in Guatemala City, Guatemala exemplifies the remarkable results that can be accomplished working with accredited clinics. Our collaboration provides patients with safe, reliable care worldwide, regardless of where they undergo treatment. Altra Medic Hospital achieved accreditation on August 18, 2023, in a manner worthy of praise and recognition.

Dr. German Vargas, the clinic's medical director, has demonstrated exceptional commitment throughout this process by making certain that Altra Medic Hospital exceeds the standards of its Guatemalan colleagues. While we believe that patient safety is a universal concept, much like the idea that a patient's airway functions the same way in the United States, Brazil, and Zimbabwe, the reality is that many countries in the developing world and the global south face barriers to their healthcare systems.

These obstacles can hinder, and sometimes even prevent, compliance with our standards. In such markets, the population (therefore, the demand) may be too small to warrant the attention of manufacturers or distributors of certain drugs, supplies, or equipment. Doing business in some countries may simply cost too much money or time to justify potential revenues. Similarly, regulatory hurdles may make some items QUAD A expects to be onsite, unavailable. We have seen many cases where patients must travel to other cities or countries for specialty care. This may be because there are no engineers to maintain equipment, or drugs and supplies are simply not available.

Altra Medic Hospital identified that Dantrolene was not available in Guatemala, and as a result, we initiated our internal process to identify alternative medications that may be available. This process involved seeking guidance and practice standards from the Ministerio de Salud Pública y Asistencia Social de la República de Guatemala and international agencies the Ministerio adopts, as well as reviewing position statements from relevant societies to verify [Clinic Name] can successfully manage cases of malignant hyperthermia.

However, before the conclusion of this process, Dr. Vargas and his team had identified and contacted a Dantrolene distributor in Mexico. The team ordered the medication and other supplies required to treat malignant hyperthermia. By virtue of Altra Medic Clinic's decisive action, patients now have protection against a potentially catastrophic condition that may not be available in any other facility in Guatemala.

Malignant hyperthermia is a rare adverse reaction to general anesthesia. Therefore, it is more likely than not that Dr. Vargas's team will never need to use it. That being said, the condition is so devastating that the protection now afforded to their patients has risen to an even higher level. Furthermore, the mindset of the Altra Medic Hospital staff and leadership to implement the most effective protections during the accreditation process will benefit patients daily throughout the care process and will mitigate any number of risks the patient unknowingly encounters.

Rather than focusing on equivalency and instead overseeing that his team could provide the best possible response to this risk, Dr. Vargas and his team deserve recognition for putting **Patients First. Always!**

Since 1980, QUAD A (a non-profit, physician-founded and led global accreditation organization) has worked with thousands of healthcare facilities to standardize and improve the quality of health care they provide - believing that patient safety should always come first. To learn more about QUAD A, their accreditation process, and why it's so important to seek out accredited facilities when making healthcare decisions, visit www.quada.org.
