

PEDIATRIC NEPHROLOGY IN VENEZUELA: NOWADAYS DRAMATIC SITUATION

The threats Venezuelans face today have reached unimaginable levels in many ways, due to the very complicated political, economical and social situation of the country. Certainly, the health care system does not escape to this, for which reason the population is suffering the lack of basic supplies and even more, patients are dying because of chronic shortage of medicines and ill-equipped hospitals. Children with nephrourological diseases are suffering the consequences of the severe crisis in Venezuela, a “rich” country with the world’s largest oil reserve. At the present time, the medical attention for these children is becoming extremely difficult.

During the last 25 years the pediatric nephrologists in the country have organized a reasonable way to attend this medical area for a population of 30 million inhabitants, with approximately 30 % under the age of 15 years. We have about 120 paediatric nephrologists distributed throughout the country. Haemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis programs, as well as four renal transplantation programs have been developed with excellent results. However, the present situation has restricted *in extremis* these programs because of the lack of the necessary medical equipment, e.g.: peritoneal dialysis catheters, dialysis machines, parts for the existing ones, immunosuppressive drugs, and so on. Kidney transplantation programs are almost suspended (from nearly 400 renal transplants/year for adults and children to less than 10 per year in 2015), and patients are losing kidneys and dying because of lack of medication and complications which cannot be treated adequately.

During the last year the status has become even more dramatic: common medications to treat adequately most of renal diseases are not available, e.g., steroids for nephrotic syndrome and other nephrological conditions, medications to provide appropriate treatment for children with chronic renal failure, antibiotics to treat adequately children with urinary tract infections, no medical supplies to dialyze children with acute renal failure and a long etc.

In addition to this, we have serious limitations in terms of diagnostic techniques which were easily available until recent years: routine and specialized radiologic, gammagraphic and laboratory studies, material for processing kidney biopsies tissue, etc. What is happening with renal patients is a sample of what occurs in all medical specialities.

Faced with this dramatic situation, Venezuelan pediatric nephrologists turn to the international community to endorse the request for Humanitarian Aid for Venezuelan patients.

Nelson Orta. MD

Michelle Lopez. MD