

Cuba Performs Rare Lung-Heart Surgery to Save Child



Santa Clara, December 26 (RHC-teleSUR) -- Cuban doctors successfully performed a rare and complex combined heart-lung surgery over the holidays, saving the life of a young child, according to Granma newspaper.

Angelo Reinier Suarez suffered numerous heart and lung issues, putting his life in imminent danger when doctors decided to do an emergency combined surgery.

The boy suffered from a congenital (existing from birth) heart defect, according to his mother. But doctors also recently detected a pulmonary valve failure and a build up of adenoids that were on the verge of causing a lung embolism — a blockage of one of the main arteries to the lung. The lower lobe of Suarez' right lung was also damaged by a past illness called histoplasmosis, caused by breathing in fungus.

Doctor Francisco Javier Vazquez, a second grade specialist in cardiovascular surgery, lead the surgery with a team of experts.

“It was a complex procedure, which in the case of pediatric patients has never before been done in Cuba,” said Vazquez, who has performed over 500 operations on minors throughout his career.

The surgery -- which was performed in Cuba's CardioCenter Comandante Ernesto Che Guevara in the central city of Santa Clara -- was an open heart surgery which lasted five hours, including stopping Suarez's heart for 120 minutes.

It involved total removal of Suarez' lower right lung lobe, closing the heart's inter ventricular communication, then removing the lung valve. The lung valve was then reconstructed using tissue from his own pericardium -- a double-walled sac containing the heart and the roots of the superior veins that carry blood to the heart -- and put back into place.

Vazquez says there are no reports of this procedure in known scientific research. The patient remained in intensive care for 18 days, but has since been discharged from the hospital and is resting comfortably at home.

Suarez told Granma: "I'm feeling good, ready to go back to school, where my teachers Yalily and Joel are waiting for me."

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