

11-23-1990

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Deborah Tyroler

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Guatemala: On Public Hospital Financial Crisis

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Friday, November 23, 1990

Administrators of Guatemala's public hospitals say they are on the verge of collapse. The 10,000-bed public hospital network is intended to serve the indigent, and is separate from Social Security facilities for employed persons. The nation's public hospitals have shut down all emergency services. The hospitals are accepting only seriously ill patients currently under treatment by public sector physicians. Deliveries of medical supplies and foodstuffs have been cut off, result of \$5 million in overdue payments to suppliers. The public hospitals have been able to continue providing minimal services in recent months due to assistance from the United Nations. On an annual basis, the state hospital system averages 250,000 admissions, 75,000 deliveries, and over 110,000 surgeries. (Basic data from AFP, 11/19/90)

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