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Cooperation in Health Care: Austral University (Argentina)

The University Hospital has been promoting health care and medical research since it was established by Opus Dei in Buenos Aires six years ago. Its clinic is open to all, whether they have the means to pay or not.

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Besides the procedures available at the Austral University Hospital, the medical personnel have extended their services to poor districts of the city and even to outlying provinces. These cooperative initiatives of the physicians, nurses, medical students, and personnel of hospital fall into three categories:

Carlos Coto heads a Foundation that raises money to enable professionals to reach Partido del Pilar, one of the poorest neighborhoods of Buenos Aires; in the past year it financed more than 700 diagnostic consultations and 26 surgical interventions.

A mobile pediatric unit was equipped with medical and dental supplies by students of the Dept. of Biomedical Sciences with the financial assistance of the McDonald's Hamburger corp. Thus far, it has served more than 23,000 children in many Argentine

towns and villages. Besides providing health care, the students recently began making presentations to poor families on children's health needs and ways to reduce domestic violence and abuse.

A third project brings together the Biomedical Sciences students, hospital personnel, and high school teachers who volunteer their time assisting young people with educational deficiencies. Its purpose is to reinforce the initiatives of persons between the ages of 7 and 18 to make something of their future by providing a study skills clinic, a gymnasium, a greenhouse, and similar facilities.

These initiatives have in common the Christian spirit set forth in the teachings of St. Josemaria Escriva, founder of Opus Dei. As he himself said in a meeting with people from every sector of society in his 1974

visit to Argentina: "When your work helps a friend, a colleague, a neighbor, you are healing, even if no one notices it; you are Christ who heals, you are Christ who never turns away from people in need--we can meet them any given day."

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