Interview: Paula Ithurbisquy, General Manager, Clinica Alemana, Chile



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objective is to be the most patient-centric clinic and we take that very seriously. Therefore, we constantly strive to provide the most modern technology, the best infrastructure and, above all, the highest-qualified and most caring professionals in order to satisfy all our patients’ healthcare needs”, says Clinica Alemana’s general manager.

As an introduction, could you introduce Clinica Alemana to our readers?

Clínica Alemana is affiliated with the German-Chilean Beneficence Corporation, a non-profit foundation established in 1905.

The German community in Chile opened its first hospital in 1918, located in the Independencia area in Santiago. The building was sold to the Bank’s Pension Fund 1970. In March 1973 the current Clinica Alemana opened, located where it is today. In the following years the clinic established itself as one of the first private health facilities in the country.

Chile’s healthcare sector was opened up to the forces of the market by a new law in 1981 that allowed private insurance companies, called Isapres (Instituciones de Salud Previsional), to compete for business. Prior to that, all Chileans were obliged to pay 4 percent of their income into

the state-run Fondo Nacional de Salud (FONASA). The new law gave people, who could pay more, a greater choice and access to better services. This development has helped to open up the private health sector in Chile.

Since then, Clinica Alemana has been a leader in the field of private healthcare, pursuing and ongoing medical development as its main priority. Our outstanding professionals and infrastructure make it happen. Our programs and services are designed to enable the medical community, patients and their families to take greatest advantage of our wide range of health care options.Clinica Alemana's principal strengths are Preventive Medicine, High Complexity Medicine, Emergency Department and Intensive Care Units. Today we have 4,000 people working for Clinica Alemana!

Also, we have a partnership agreement with Universidad del Desarrollo. In early 2002 the Faculty of Medicine was created as a result of the partnership between the University and Clinica Alemana.

To which extent is Clinica Alemana a benchmark for other Chilean clinics / hospitals to aspire to?

Today Clínica Alemana is recognized as one of the best and most advanced hospitals in Latin America. The clinic has transformed itself as a reference for the industry. Clinica Alemana has been able to provide the latest in health care technology and continuously expanded its services.

I took over the helm of the clinic in 2012, with the ambition to continue leading the private industry.

Our daily activities are always focused on our patients. Clinica Alemana's objective is to be the most patient-centric clinic and we take that very seriously. Therefore, we constantly strive to provide the most modern technology, the best infrastructure and, above all, the highest-qualified and most caring professionals in order to satisfy all our patients' healthcare needs. Our aim is to excel in the provision of these services, especially because we are aware that the people we care for are usually going through difficult moments in their lives.

Naturally every hospital can purchase the latest technology, attract the best doctors and build facilities. But what sets Clinica Alemana is the patient experience. We have created an atmosphere where patients feel at home, feel loved and receive the attention they deserve.

How do you evaluate the level of patient care?

In fact, this year, Clínica Alemana ranked first in a study, known as the Praxis Xperience Index (PXI). The Praxis consulting company recently launched a survey to measure how customers view their experiences with the most important Chilean brands. The investigation included 98 brands and 25 industries in various sectors, such as retail, health, financial services, home services, public transportation and telco (cable TV, mobile phones, triple pack), among others.

One of the reasons that Clinica Alemana has been recognized as the best and most advanced hospital in Chile is because we are a branch of the German-Chilean Beneficence Corporation, a non-profit foundation. We have therefore been able to execute a longstanding policy of profit reinvestment. In addition we have a long-term view on our strategy in order to be prepared for the next century.

Clinica Alemana has been ranked second best for many years. Due to its reputation the clinic receives patients from all over the continent. Would you outline what programs you have developed to reach out to international patients?

Clínica Alemana has the strongest program in Chile to reach international patients. Our service is called International Patient Service.

This program makes it easy for international patients to make appointments with physicians, to seek a medical second opinion or treatment for a complex illness if it is needed. Our International Patient Coordinator manages the following medical and personal needs prior to your arrival, during your stay and after returning home.

We are receiving many Bolivian and Peruvian patients, who visit us for complex surgeries. I expect significant growth in this area.

What initiatives have you implemented to reach out to the community?

At Clinica Alemana we believe that health is more than just treating diseases. Good health includes caring for the physical, emotional and social needs of our community. And that includes prevention. Therefore, we strive to bring the world of medicine and medical issues closer to the community, always keeping in mind that prevention is the key to ensuring a better quality of life.

Unfortunately there are also sick people who cannot afford private healthcare. For that reason we have developed programs to reach out to them. Qualified professionals from all fields of science contribute to a great variety of programs. For example, we have established a partnership with the Hospital Padre Alberto Hurtado in different specialties. Thus we have a benefit program targeted to different pathologic and medical specialties aimed to public hospitals and the community in

general, which is guided with an annual budget.

Clínica Alemana has focused its efforts and its resources on one purpose only: the health and welfare of the community it serves.

How does Clinica Alemana attract and retain the best talent available?

Medical schools in Chile deliver very good doctors. Looking at Clinica Alemana, we are a prime location for medical graduates given our high level medical facilities and equipment and our overall reputation. Therefore we are able to attract the best medical personnel. Of our consultants many trained and worked abroad. Our doctors have the opportunity to work and train at our partner hospitals around the world. For example, if we purchase the latest technology in urology we send urologist abroad to train and get familiar with the equipment. When the urologist comes back to Clinica Alemana, he transfers the knowledge to our specialists.

We have partnership agreements with world famous hospitals and universities in the United States and Europe. Within which we can highlight Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic, MD Anderson Cancer Center, Children´s Hospital of Philadelphia, HSS Hospital for Special Surgery, Center for Reproductive Medicine, University Hospital Brussels, Faculty of Medicine of the Heidelberg University and German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ).

For example, MD Anderson, part of the University of Texas, is our sister institution. Since 2003 when our agreement was signed, MD Anderson have continued to collaborate with Clinica Alemana in the departments of Urology, Genitourinary Medical Oncology and Radiation Oncology regarding novel treatments and technologies used in the fields of prostate, renal, bladder and testicular cancers. The standard of care received by a patient at Clínica Alemana is the same as you will receive in Western Europe and the US.

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