The World Calls for Solidarity

Health & Science
Cuban Science Committed to Cope with Pandemic

Culture
Grand Theater of Havana Celebrates its 182nd Anniversary

Economy
U.S. Oil Speculation and Low Demand
Tourism during and after Covid-19

By Roberto F. CAMPOS

Havana.- Tourism experts hope to review that industry after the Covid-19 pandemic has run its course. Opinions vary, even when desperate businesses want to see recovery sooner than it can actually happen.

The increase of videoconferences and telework has brought to light some elements of business travel and MICE, sectors linked to business travel, meetings, conferences and exhibitions, according to Preferente.com. These new ideas might impact urban hotels and those specialized in congresses and events.

Hence, there is an ever increasing consensus among hotel managers and touristic agencies on how the post-Covid tourist industry will look like. The key elements that will transform a new sector are to be: less volume, fewer trips, a new form of product, less assets and uncertainty of profit.

According to Preferente, volume will likely decrease as airlines (IAG, Lufthansa, Easyjet, among others) are cutting their seats per plane, which will translate to more expensive prices, in times of demand that are likely to fall due to the crisis. Around the world, people will spend less money when the demand is likely to fall due to the crisis.

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Lastly, permanent uncertainty will affect all travel plans.

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The World Calls for Solidarity

By Luis ARBESÚ

HAVANA.- The international community and UN authorities call to fight the Covid-19 pandemic together, the U.S. government continues with its obstructive policies, sanctions and blockade.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and UN Human Rights Commissioner Michelle Bachelet have reiterated a mutual request to lift all sanctions, because they hinder the response of many countries to cope with the current pandemic. Washington, on the contrary, has responded by tightening its unilateral, coercive measures against countries such as Syria, Venezuela and Cuba.

Since the pandemic broke out, Cuba's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Rodriguez, has denounced how the Trump administration has intensified its hostility against the Caribbean island in a context where countries should be supporting one another. The U.S. blockade and sanctions have no legal or ethical justification. The blockade against Cuba is a genocidal, and the Minister of Twitter: Despite that siege, Cuba shows its solidarity, sending medical brigades to different parts of the world to fight Covid-19. According to Cuba's representative to the United Nations, Ana Silvia Rodríguez, the use of sanctions as a foreign policy instrument is medically unscientific and medically unscientific.

The ambassador denounced on Twitter that Cuba and China have sent equipment, medicines, food supplies and fuel to Cuba as a sign of solidarity but the U.S. blockade has prevented its arrival to the island. In addition, she noted that siege is the main obstacle when buying materials needed to fight the pandemic and to offer or receive vaccines internationally.

The Cuban foreign affairs minister also denounced the U.S. Department of State's claim that Cuba is not allowing the delivery of the equipment needed to fight the pandemic.

"The reality of the pandemic: Cuba cannot get ventilators from several of its regular providers, because two of the companies that manufacture medical equipment were bought by a U.S. company. Medical groups, the exporting/importing company of the Cuban Public Health Ministry, received a surprising notification that Rif Medical and Acariton manufacturers were bought by the Illinois-based Vyaire Medical Inc."

"The order that we received today is to suspend all operations with Medicuba," the note reads.

The U.S. blockade prevented the delivery of ventilators that were part of an existing contract and that are indispensable to treat COVID-19 patients in serious or critical condition, stated the Cuban Foreign Affairs Ministry's General Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Eugenio Martínez Enriquez.

Meanwhile, the Cuban Ambassador at UNESCO, Telmo Eguiguren, stated that the U.S. blockade hinders the acquisition of medicines, health equipment, materials and other supplies.

This contract with the appeal made by the United Nations to help Cuba and other countries to increase cooperation and solidarity against the pandemic, he emphasized.

The Alliance of Small Insular States, the Caribbean Community, the Group of 77 plus China, the Non-aligned Movement and the Group of States for the Defense of the Principles of the UN Charter, among others, have also requested the end of unilateral coercive measures that impede the fight against COVID-19.

Cuba Science Committee Committed to Cope with Pandemic

By Luis ARBESÚ

HAVANA.- The Cuban scientific community is developing in multiple areas to cope with the coronavirus pandemic, from the development of vaccines to the design of ventilators, diagnostic tests and inquiry systems, among the most significant.

It all started after the World Health Organization announced the first warnings about what was happening in the Chinese city of Wuhan, the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak. Different scientists came together to prepare the country for a pandemic, officials from the Cuban Public Health Ministry explained.

Based on international experiences, various companies of different sectors and disciplines, including the private sector, joined efforts and re-addressed the situation. For example, it was necessary to expand the hospitals: as internationally, health systems were being flooded due to the rapid increase of cases.

It became clear that ventilators were an indispensable equipment at intensive care units while in short supply around the world due to high demand. It also proved important to provide health staff with clothes, materials and means to protect themselves.

Some of the initiatives included the creation of protection boxes for intensive care units, including clothing, aprons and face masks due to the low availability.

Also, Combined Digital Medical Technology Company is producing defibrillators and monitors for patients, infusion bombs, and oximeters, among other equipment needed at the ICU.

Other actions are intended to replace materials and vaccine devices used, for example, during the PCR testing, by the SARS-COV-2 virus.

The Cuban scientific community is working on the development of various vaccine candidates and another to enhance natural immunity the CIGB 2020 developed by the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Center.

The CIGB 2020 drug is widely designed to treat immunodeficiency associated with aging (it's being used during this health emergency in COVID-19 patients for more than 10 years, in particular, to improve their immune system.

The Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Center, founded in the 1980s, has another proposal to fight the pandemic: CIGB 218, which is designed for patients in critical conditions older than 65 years, in particular, to improve their immune system.

The World Calls for Solidarity

By Deny FRANCIS

DOCTOR APPLIES HUMANITARIAN MEDICAL CARE in the Bronx, NY

HAVANA.- While facing COVID-19 on the front line, Dr. Melissa Barber doesn't have a lot of time to breathe, but she knows her organization in the Bronx can have the same impact as in Cuba.

"The Bronx has been suffering a lot; many hospitals are jam-packed and we can't even treat new patients because there are not enough resources or means for protection, such as gloves and masks," said Barber, a graduate from the Cuban Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) in 2005.

"I live in a community that is badly affected by COVID-19, as it is very poor and the majority of its people don't have medical insurance or resources. Many people are dying in the emergency rooms," Dr. Barber told the Havana Reporter.

"My aunt called me one morning and told me she couldn't breathe, and we had to take her to the hospital in an ambulance. She spent two days in the ER," she said.

"What shocked her most of all was waiting in the packed hospitals in the middle of this crisis, without receiving treatment or assistance because of the lack of resources." In "Cuban medical system the humanism is very important that patient's lives," she noted.

"Before the pandemic, my community has had hospitals opened but they don't have the adequate conditions for proper COVID-19 testing," the doctor continued.

"The worst thing is that Trump was warned of a potential pandemic since November and he didn't take any measures to prevent the tragedy the U.S. is facing," Dr. Barber said.

"According to Barber, medical assistance doesn't start with the hospital, but with organization in the community and with the needs of the people. The concept that Dr. Barber is using to try to mobilize a solution to the pandemic in the Bronx is the same as in Cuba."

"Everything I learned in Cuba has been tremendous hospital training," she affirmed referring to some of the actions she has implemented in her community and vulnerable people in her community. "Some people have asked me why Cuba is not sending doctors, they even ask me if they can make the formal request to bring them to our community. I wish so," Dr. Barber said.

"She knows that this is, for the first time Cuba extends its friendly hand to her country. In 2005, when hurricane Katrina hit the U.S., Cuba stated its will to send doctors from the Henry Reeve Brigade. "Cuba is synonymous with internationalism, and the country is always willing to help."

According to Barber, the idea has been present since the beginning of the Revolution, she stressed. The humanist vocation Dr. Barber was trained in since 1999 to 2005, Dr. Barber was studied in the E L A M, an educational institution in Havana, founded in the 1980s, has another proposal to fight the pandemic: a vaccine candidate, which regulates the uncontrolled response of the immune system during hyper-inflammation, they explained.

Vaccine candidates that are being used in clinical trials are palliative treatments that help increase the immune system's response to fight the virus, according to scientists.

"It's worth mentioning that Cuba is working hard on four candidates to develop a vaccine. While waiting for the much desired solution, some distance separated from the best option so far, as relayed by the local authorities.

Health & Science
Havana.- The Alicia Alonso Grand Theater of Havana celebrates its 182nd anniversary this year, communicating with a soft light illuminated. When COVID-19 social isolation measures are no longer necessary, Latin America’s oldest theater in operation will restart its construction.

The importance this theater has for Cuban culture goes beyond the arts themselves. It’s worthwhile mentioning that throughout the 19th century, its hall welcomed Cuba’s legendary Anna Pavlova also captivated the 19th century, danced on the stage of this theater, famous Anna Pavlova also captured the attention of the then Cuban General Captain behind the establishment of the Republic of Cuba - on May 20, 1902 - and comprehensive restoration that turned it into an asset of the Cuban state, the theater was precisely the person who named the statue of Alonso in the role of Giselle was born on the island from the mix of African roots that define Cuban culture and Alicia Alonso, names whose mere mention do great credit to the theater.

Since the beginning, different personalities from all over the world have exhibited their talent in this magnificent theater. Actresses Sara Bernhardt and Eleonora Dusse, internationally recognized stars on the stage of this theater, which was then known as the National Theater.

In the field of dance, an important event happened in 1841 when Fanny Elssler, one of the five most outstanding of the 19th century, danced on the stage of this theater, illuminating.

The Alicia Alonso Grand Theater of Havana, the theater was founded in 1838 by the name of Tacu, the summation of the then Cuban General Captain behind its construction.

It is not a surprise then that, since 2016, the name of the legendary ballerina was added to its official denomination and a bronze statue of Alonso in the role of Giselle was placed in one of its corners.

In 1860, the theater is the seat of the Cuban National Ballet and venue of Havana’s International Ballet Festival, an event that gathers the most famous dancers from around the world.

In the 21st century, Marcel Marceau, Sasha Waltz, Tamara Rojo, Alina Cojocaru, Natalia Osipova, Ivan Vasiliev, Johan Kobborg, David Hallberg, Vladimir Malakhov - just to mention a few from abroad - have stood out on the stage of the theater, and the show continues.

Those artists include Marta Gómez, from Spain, Dominicans Víctor Víctor, Maridalia Hernández, her counterpart in the territory, José Mari and Griffith’s Gomez de Avelenda, among many others.

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INFORMATIVE SECTION
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The Caribbean

Solidarity and unity are two essential tools to face the COVID-19 pandemic in the Caribbean, to avoid future deaths, pain and desolation.

Cuba has extended solidarity to several nations of the region through medical brigades, which stand out for their professionalism and experience in emergencies such as the one the world is currently facing.

These brigades are part of the Henry Reeve Contingent, which was created in 2005 by the leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro. These groups are already working in Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Barbados, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, Belize, and Haiti.

As part of the solidarity vision of the Cuban people and government, other groups also provide their assistance in the fight against the pandemic in Latin America, Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Despite the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States and notwithstanding the shortages this outdated measure creates, Cuban doctors share their knowledge with the doctors and experts of those countries, and join them in this international fight.

Cuba has greatly contributed in handling the pandemic in region, which according to Executive Director of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) Joy St John, the Caribbean nations face “pretty well.” St. John recently stated that those results are related to the prompt measures to restrict the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, and recommended a coordinated approach while the region gets ready to face the next phases.

By virtue of these recommendations, CARICOM (Caribbean) member countries and other nations of the region make individual efforts to face the pandemic, while working together to coordinate strategies and share experiences.

On Wednesday, April 15, the CARICOM Heads of State and Government together with leaders of the associated member countries held the ninth virtual emergency meeting to analyze different proposals for a common public health and border policy, in order to restrict the virus from spreading further.

According to the leaders, a collective approach will allow financial institutions to face fiscal challenges related to the health crisis. They also proposed to analyze common health policies linked to the joint acquisition of pharmaceutical products and personal protection equipment, and the hiring of additional health staff, which would help face the shortages of supplies.

The State leaders also demanded the lifting of the blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba and Venezuela, at a time in which all countries should be working together to fight the pandemic.

“This is definitely the time for Caribbean solidarity, given the absence of global unity,” Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda Gaston Browne wrote on social media.

Topics such as food production to avoid famine in the region in the context of the pandemic were also discussed at the meeting. Guatemalan Prime Minister Mio Ramirez also affirmed that his country, together with CARICOM, calls for regional unity to face the crisis of COVID-19.

He stressed that they are analyzing the ways the Caribbean can maintain itself during the world crisis in relation to food. Nagamootoo—who is also the head of the National Task Force against Coronavirus—indicated that Guyana has the advantage of increasing food security in the area. For years, Guyana has been promoted as the region’s food supplier, just as Trinidad and Tobago has been considered the Caribbean’s industrial area, he added.

Nagamootoo also recalled the recent statements of the CARICOM Chairwoman and Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Amor Mottley, on the notion of a “single domestic space” for CARICOM in relation to travel, food security, health and other areas, which are especially pertinent at present.

He stressed that this is the best time for the Caribbean region, particularly the CARICOM member nations, to be united as a single domiciled space.

Caribbean Unity in the Face of COVID-19

By Odalys Troya

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By Odalys Troya
Cuban Music as a Healing Method

By Libradilla

HAVANA.- Hundreds of accounts on social media and digital platforms, the television and the radio remain active these days to bring Cuban music straight from artists' houses to the public.

The online concerts, performed by Cuban musicians over the past weeks to support the measures adopted by the government against Covid-19 stand out among the programs broadcast by the national television, radio stations and on the virtual platforms that promote the initiative on their websites. 

The hashtags "#EstamosContigo" and "#MusicosPorCuba" have jointly broadcast those means are also used to reproduce the digital platforms of the Cuban radio station, on the Facebook account of Ethiel Failde. Eduardo Sosa's online concert was seen in 40 countries, with more than 5,000 reproductions.

The concerts can be seen through the Canal Claw TV channel, Radio Progress radio station, on the Facebook account of the Cuban Institute of Music (ICM) and Cuban Institute of Radio and Television, as well as the digital platforms of the Cuban Ministry of Culture (MINCULT).

Those means are also used to reproduce the online concerts performed by Cuban musicians to keep the people safe from coronavirus.

On March 13, the Ministry of Culture announced the suspension of mass cultural events, both national and international, that entail large groups of people. The Cuban Institute of Cinema was the first big institution to announce the suspension of activities that were to take place such as the award ceremony of the National Film Prize, this year won by Senel Paz and Paco Pato, and the world premiere of the film "El Mayor" by the late director Rigberto López.

Meanwhile, the 24th International Cabañitas Music Festival, put off until 2021, isopropyl alcohol conditions will then be used to hold the country's most important music event.

The situation caused by the Covid-19 disease has forced hundreds of countries, Cuba included, to suspend artistic events and close theaters. In addition to social distancing measures. 

In a festival such as Cubadisco, for instance, the Ministry of Culture announced the suspension of activities that were to take place such as the award ceremony of the National Film Prize, this year won by Senel Paz and Paco Pato, and the world premiere of the film "El Mayor" by the late director Rigberto López.

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Venezuela: Between Covid-19 and Peace Threats

By William Olegario

CARACAS: While humanity is focusing its efforts to contain the huge economic and human losses caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, Venezuela is waging an additional battle in favor of peace and stability in the face of U.S. aggressions in addition to the tightening of coercive measures and the U.S. government’s refusal to suspend them despite requests by the majority of the international community, Washington’s hostile policy against Caracas has recently gone from complicity to political biocidal, fake accusations, and even direct military interventions.

April started with the Trump administration’s order to increase military presence in the Latin American region, especially in Central America, with the pretext of preventing the anti-drug trafficking fight.

"Caracas and Havana are among the worst world health crises of the past 100 years to overcome the Venezuelan government. The world can now see the number of people that are ruling the United States," denounced Samuel Moncada, the Venezuelan ambassador at the United Nations. Since August 2009, Moncada recalled, Venezuela has demonstrated its resolve against blockade against the South American country, as part of its efforts to cause a change of regime.

Washington’s aggressive military maneuvers followed up with false accusations against Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and other top officials for alleged drug trafficking crimes.

"This U.S. game includes offering an international reward to anyone that provides information about the Venezuelan president and top officials, leading to a dangerous moment of war in the continent," Moncada denounced in a letter addressed to the world leaders.

U.S. plans of interference also included aécordable conspiracy plotted in Colombia to carry out a similar terrorism and anti-terror acts in Venezuela, led by noted Cuban Colber Alidos in compliance with opposition leader Juan Guaidó and “U.S. advisors.”

Likewise, the U.S. government ratified its stance by announcing a similar transitional government –without Maduro or Guaidó– that calls for presidential elections within six to 12 months, in return for lifting the coercive measures implemented by the White House.

"Venezuela is a free, independent and democratic country that does not nor will not accept hegemony by any foreign government,” the Foreign Affairs Ministry said in a release.

The Pandemic to Worsen Poverty

HAMBURG, Germany - Some 12 million unemployed people and the amount to 30 million of the poor will be affected in the Columbusasz (ECLAC), the executive secretary of the Pan-European Law Firm Noerr.

The leader of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) also indicated that a contraction of 5.3 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the area is estimated, a scenario arranged by the European Union –Latin America and the Caribbean (EU-LAC) headquartered in Hamburg in Germany.

Likewise, the pandemic would cause economic downturn in regional exports by 15 percent in 2020.

In the face of this situation, Barcena suggested the establishment of a new development model with more inclusive and decentralized institutions that increase attention to minorities, women, the elderly and climate change.

She commented that in Latin America and the Caribbean there is a labor force with 53 percent of informality, which will sharpen the impact of the coronavirus consequences.

The pandemic invites us to think about the most dominant economic-commercial model; the privatization of health systems that led to huge fragility, revealing the enormous inequality that exists in our region, the retired, Barcena noted.

The U.S. administration might also hope to win political points by allowing U.S. citizens –especially Cuban-Americans of Puerto Rico to bring lawsuits against foreign companies, he noted.

However, the final result, Bellinger added, is that the majority of such lawsuits have been U.S. companies with few operations in Cuba, instead of Cuban-American companies that now have or operate properties on the island.

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At the beginning of the year the barrel of this light crude oil—taken as reference in the United States—was sold at $45, but it began to experience a decline over the past two months due to the Covid-19-driven lack of demand.

Analytic sustain that the aforementioned situation made WTI oil close with negative numbers, although a few days earlier the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies (a supergroup of oil producers such as Russia, known as OPEC+) had agreed to cut daily production by 9.7 million barrels.

However, many investors were skeptical of an increase in their prices, taking into consideration the reduction of the world demand. In fact, the market reaction to that measure has been almost imperceptible, with the price recording more falls than rises.

Such oil price falls had taken place before 1983, when the market statistics were first made, analysts confirm. It’s worth mentioning that oil prices were also affected for a long time by the price war between Saudi Arabia (the OPEC leader) and Russia, which failed to reach an agreement pertaining to oil production at the beginning of March.

In spite of the current situation, oil prices could improve in coming days, experts say.

“Focusing on the contract for May delivery could be deceitful,” stated Watt Smith, an expert from Clipper Data. There is a lot more movement on the barrel of crude oil in June delivery, regardless of the falling trend, keeping prices at over $20, the experts report.

Although restrictions on people’s mobility is most of the world and the economic impact could lead to a fall in oil prices, experts agree that the price will recover because it is the most commercialized raw material and the axis of the world economy.

Oil moves several trillion in the world annually and, according to the chief executives of the sector’s leading companies, it will be the leader of the energy market until 2040, at least.

Havana.- For the first time ever in the raw material market, the West Texas Intermediate (WTI) company in New York closed out with red numbers in a week that the analysts called “black Monday.”

Heavy speculation and the extremely low numbers, due to Covid-19, made this crude oil fall 305 percent in just one day. By that day (April 21) operations closed with -$37.63, as the storage capacity in the United States ran out due to the price demand. Empty streets, airplanes on land, closed factories and a vast number of people in home quarantine characterize the situation that maintains three days, with the price of WTI crude oil and other energy indications continuing to lower.

International Sports in a Period of Total Limbo

By Joseph DIAZ

Havana.- International sports are experiencing a period of total limbo due to the worldwide coronavirus. All foreign tournaments and sports events for this year have been cancelled off the calendar, so nothing and no one can escape the real reality.

Football, tennis, basketball, cycling, chess, track and field, judo, wrestling, boxing... the list of victims is long and the number of events suspended or cancelled continues to grow. The present situation is far from suggesting an encouraging future, as it appears nothing can save events such as Wimbledon, Roland Garros or the Champions League.

Some skeptics question the holding of the 32nd edition of the Olympic Games in Tokyo, now postponed to 2021. The road to the Japanese capital is paved with uncertainties. Doubts much unforeseen levels and dollars among sport fans increase. At this point, the only thing that’s certain is that the International Olympic Committee moved the calendar to July 23-August 8.

The COVID-19 pandemic has kept the world’s biggest sports in quarantine, hindering the dreams of millions of people and postponing the fantasies of thousands of athletes. It nurtured opportunities to see the best athletes and gather at sporting events. Adjustments in the training cycles will now occur, while athletes willing to forge their legends will emerge, and those who have made history might run out of fame.

There will certainly be new television and advertising contracts and more than just a few details will change. However, there are more important tasks at the present, as preserving everyone’s health goes far beyond any athletic event. Thus, when the moment of glory arrives, the real possibility to open the speed limits in the circuits, like the Sachsenring race, in the city of Hohenstein-Ernstthal, was scheduled to start on June 21 and seemed to have the real possibility to open the speed agenda. But that won’t be the case, and the organiser leaves MotoGP in the air.

Football can’t escape the storm either. Even its economic power (power) wasn’t able to fight back against the coronavirus, the agent responsible for a sport never seen before. The domestic leagues fill an ocean of doubts, although in Germany and England there are plans to restart events behind closed doors, with the approval of governmental and health authorities.

Yes, international sports have experienced a halt and the next best thing has become social media, with advice on how to stay active during this limbo.

Plan Earth has quasi-eternal lessons that will be impossible to start the competitive period with the German Grand Prix, the Italian Grand Prix, or any other international events for this year. The domestic leagues fill an ocean of doubts, although in Germany and England there are plans to restart events behind closed doors, with the approval of governmental and health authorities.

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IMPATIENCE AMONG THE CROWD Some have lost hope. For one, German tennis player Jan-Lennard Struff, who has already lost faith: “In my opinion, we won’t be seeing any international tournaments anytime soon; as it will not be possible for players to move because of travel restrictions.”

In statements to the news agency Advantage, Struff (34 in the world ranking) opened the Pandora’s Box. He mentioned the idea that, at this point, doesn’t seem to be a chimera, because it really ‘will be difficult to restart the 2020 professional tennis season,” as he said. The MotoGP has not started either, and its current leader, Spanish Marc Marquez, hopes to drive his Honda No. 93 that the people miss in the circuits. However, the top motorcycling officials are hopeful in spite of the hard blows of the recent weeks. They were forced to understand that it will be impossible to start the competitive period with the German Grand Prix, the Italian Grand Prix, or any other international events for this year.

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I CHOOSE CUBA to walk

Cuban Program for the treatment of diabetic foot with Heberprot-P®

The Diabetes Mellitus is a non-transmissible chronic disease that has a high incidence in the world population. It can bring about important complications to the person who suffer from it. Among them the diabetic foot ulcer, that is responsible of physical-motor disabilities. This is why an integral and multidisciplinary attention is carried out on these patients, emphasizing in the prevention, control and treatment of the disease.

One of the most important elements of this program is the usage of a revolutionary and unique drug created in Cuba: The Heberprot-P®, prescribed for the therapy of the diabetic foot ulcer (of in-hospital usage) It has become quite a worldwide event for the possibilities it offers to face this suffering. Its application allows to reduce the risks of amputation due to these lesions in the 78% of the cases.