

# *Cuban-Venezuelan ‘Operation Miracle’ Program Returns Eyesight of 688,000 Bolivians*

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La Paz, October 14 (RHC)-- Operation Miracle, the free Cuban-Venezuelan eye-surgery program launched in 2004, has either returned or improved the eye-sight of some 688,000 Bolivians.

Rodrigo Guzman, an official in charge of the eye-care program with Bolivia's Ministry of Health, says most of the surgeries were performed on patients suffering from pterygium --a disease where eye tissue grows due to exposure to wind and sun, a common problem in the country.

Operations have also been successfully performed on patients suffering from cataracts, when opacity of the eye lens prevents light from passing through, causing total or partial sight loss.

Bolivian President Evo Morales launched the program last year. He thanked Cuban doctors for their solidarity and unconditional help, saying they are an example not only for Bolivia but also for the entire region and the world.

The late revolutionary leaders, Cuba's Fidel Castro and Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, launched the program back in 2004. During its first year, only Venezuelan patients were treated. But in 2005, Fidel and Chavez

decided to extend Operation Miracle to other Caribbean, Central and South American countries.

Initially, patients had to travel to Cuba for treatment, but in 2006 the program set up ophthalmology centers in several nations, including Bolivia.

According to Cuba's Granma newspaper, there are currently 65 ophthalmology centers attached to Operation Miracle in 18 countries across Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. Equipped with 93 operating rooms, these centers provide treatment to people in 34 nations.

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