



HEALTHY SOLUTIONS

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MEDICAL TOURISM
FACILITATOR

Orthopedic Care in Guatemala

With no conscious effort at all, our bones and joints and muscles engage as one miraculous mechanical unit. They propel us forward, as intended, with perfectly syncopated balance and strength. That is, until the pain starts.

Sometimes it's a dull ache in the hips or a "slippery," unstable feeling in the knees that gives you concern. Ibuprophen and other anti-inflammatories can work wonders to reduce discomfort. However, when the pain keeps you up at night, and it's difficult to rise from sitting, it is time to see the doctor.

ABOUT HIPS

X-rays may show loss of the cartilage in the hip socket and a "bone-on-bone" appearance. Bone spurs and bone cysts are commonly seen on detailed diagnostic scans like magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or computed tomography (CT) scans. The goal of hip replacement surgery is to relieve pain and increase the mobility and function of a damaged hip joint, and is usually considered only when other therapies, such as physical therapy and pain medications, have failed.

Minimally invasive hip replacement allows the surgeon to perform the hip replacement through one or two small incisions. Patients usually have less pain compared with traditional hip replacement surgery, and rehabilitation is faster. Total hip replacement, called total hip arthroplasty, is a common orthopedic procedure also; it involves remov-



ing the head of the thighbone (femur) and replacing the ball-and-socket mechanism of the hip with artificial implants.

Hip prostheses consist of a ball component, made of metal or ceramic, and a socket, which has an insert or liner made of plastic, ceramic or metal. The femoral component is generally cobalt chromium combined with titanium, which induces bone growth into the implant. The ceramic head of the acetabular cup is coated with bone growth inducing material. The implants used in hip replacement are biocompatible—meaning they're designed to be accepted by your body—and they're made to resist corrosion, degradation and wear.

In Guatemala, Dr. Guillermo Claverie is a leading figure in the field of orthopedics. He has over 25 years of experience and performs 500 total hip and knee replacements per year. Dr. Claverie has documented

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high success rates with private patients from all around the world, and with local Guatemalans who benefit from low-cost surgeries through his charitable foundation, Fundaorto. The Guatemalan-American Foundation for Advanced Orthopedic Surgery was founded by Dr. Claverie and his wife in 1999.

Arthroscopy is a common surgical procedure in which a joint (arthro-) is viewed (-scopy) using a small camera. During the procedure, your orthopedic surgeon inserts the arthroscope (a small camera instrument about the size of a pencil) into your knee joint. The arthroscope sends the image to a high-definition television monitor so that your surgeon can see the structures of the knee in great detail. Arthroscopy is a very effective tool that allows your surgeon to feel, repair or remove damaged tissue.

In the prestigious and modern Multimedia Hospital in Guatemala City, Dr. Álvaro Collia has specialized in traumatology, orthopedics and sports medicine for over 11 years. In his practice, he normally treats 300-350 cases of shoulder, hip and knee problems per month. Dr. Collia performs about 20 total hip and knee replacements every month with nearly 100% successful results and patient satisfaction. Since 2010, Dr. Collia has been researching both minimally invasive surgery methods and stem cell therapies in order to offer his patients the most cutting-edge medical treatments available.

The materials used in artificial joints vary, depending on the type of joint being replaced and how the joint needs to function.

Hip joints, for example, need to be sturdy and able to bear your body's weight. Knee joints need to be flexible as well as strong. In general, the components must be durable, flexible and able to function in the body without causing an immune system reaction. Replacements for hip and knee joints include portions made from metal, such as stainless steel, titanium or chrome and cobalt alloys. The patella or kneecap replacement is made of a strong, durable plastic called polyethylene. The zirconium implants are made of metal that has gone through a process that allows oxygen to absorb into the metal, creating a ceramic surface. These implants incorporate the benefits of a smooth surface with the benefits of a hard material, making it an ideal option for both hips and knees.

Artificial joints have improved greatly since they were first introduced around 40 years ago, and all the finest high-tech Biomet implants are imported to Guatemala direct from the manufacturer. There are new types of knee replacement parts that are highly flexible, allowing the knee to bend up to 155 degrees. The pieces are designed to fit perfectly together and to function as closely as possible to a natural joint. Special bone cement is used in some cases to hold static parts of the artificial joint in place.

While traditional implants last about 15 years, those made of these newer materials potentially can last up to 20 or 25 years. Guatemalan surgeons, with many years of global training, extensive practical experience and cutting-edge technical instrumentation, are striding gracefully and confidently into the future. 