

About ASCARDIO

What is now Venezuela's most famous cardiovascular care centre was the vision of one man – Dr. Bartolome Finizola – who in 1976 saw the need for the poorer classes to have access to quality healthcare, especially those suffering from cardiovascular conditions. It was Dr Finizola's goal to develop a new administrative model that would provide logistic and economic support to Venezuela's health sector, mainly in the area of cardiovascular disease control.

Few would have dreamed that one man's desire to find a workable solution for improving healthcare for his people could have evolved, within the short span of two decades, from a small outpatient healthcare facility into the world class, internationally renowned cardiovascular centre now known as ASCARDIO.

Located in Barquisimeto – a city of some one million in Venezuela's Lara State – ASCARDIO is a non-governmental, non-profit, community-based organisation focused on cardiovascular disease prevention, the development of a cardiovascular disease-focused healthcare system and on promoting good health. Much of ASCARDIO's success is attributable to its focus on community and volunteer participation as well as on developing strategic alliances with private and public sector organisations.

One such strategic alliance is the joint venture that Caribbean Heartcare Medcorp (CHCm) recently entered into with ASCARDIO – a move that falls in line with founder Dr. Finizola's drive to develop cardiology and interventional cardiology resources throughout the region based on the ASCARDIO experience. CHCm's alliance with ASCARDIO will enable us to tap into the resources of one of the most modern, progressive and successful cardiovascular centres.

The ASCARDIO experiment in health sector reform extends well beyond the walls of its modern full service hospital, which is fully equipped with the medical, technological and human professional resources to provide primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare to Venezuela's 24 million population often at heavily subsidised rates. ASCARDIO is now an impressive medical service complex, which also includes a training centre for undergraduate and postgraduate medical students specialising in cardiovascular disciplines, a medical library, an emergency ambulance service, a blood bank, a cardiac rehabilitation programme and even a communications department, which has developed and implemented community public health education programmes for promoting good health practices and cardiovascular disease prevention to the people of Venezuela, from as young as school age.

ASCARDIO is also heavily research-oriented, initiating studies to monitor and collect data on chronic diseases, particularly cardiovascular disease and its risk factors. In 1987 and again in 1997, it undertook the Lara State Heart Health Study and pioneered extensive studies such as the Global Youth Tobacco Survey and more recently, the Global School Health Survey. The organisation is now a member of Americas Network for Chronic Disease Surveillance – a network of professionals established in 2003 to enhance chronic disease surveillance capacity within the region.