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Meet Manuel Cobos, transplant surgeon and researcher

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Follow Dr. Cobos as he works to provide a patient with a new liver and performs surgery using a tiny video camera.

Jul 31, 2018

Manuel Cobos, a transplant surgeon in Argentina, works with patients suffering from liver failure. For patients who have exhausted other treatment options, transplant surgery may offer the last hope. Unfortunately, liver donors are in short supply, and in a world where liver disease is on the rise, the need for alternative treatments is growing.

To help search for alternatives, in 2015 Dr. Cobos took a three-month break from his normal work to participate in the Next Generation Scientist program run by Novartis and the University of Basel in Switzerland. There he learned about designing and managing clinical trials of experimental treatments in patients. While at Novartis, he met researchers exploring the biological processes that facilitate livers to regenerate themselves. Intrigued, he returned a year later for an internship with the liver research group of Jan Tchorz at the Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research.

Dr. Cobos is currently working on an M.D.-Ph.D. at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata in Argentina, while also continuing to perform transplants. In 2017, photographer Andrea Bruce followed Dr. Cobos through the process of transplanting a liver.



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Dr. Cobos (left) confers with colleagues during his work as a transplant surgeon in Argentina.

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Here he prepares to operate on a liver donor in Santa Fe, a city in northeastern Argentina.



After the operation, Dr. Cobos and his team head to the airport and board a plane to transport the liver to Buenos Aires, where a patient awaits an organ transplant.

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Back in Buenos Aires and after working all night, Dr. Cobos and his team finish preparing the donated liver for transplantation in one of the hospitals where he works.



Dr. Cobos prepares for the transplant surgery, which was successful.

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3/5

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He and his team also perform surgery on patients with liver and pancreatic cancers, using a small video camera to guide their work. Called laparoscopic surgery, the approach requires relatively small incisions and typically leads to a quicker recovery than traditional techniques for patients with liver and pancreatic tumors.



Intent on their work, Dr. Cobos and his team guide their instruments using a video monitor above the operating table. The demand for such emergency treatment is expected to increase with the current epidemic of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, a condition linked to obesity that can progress to more severe diseases causing liver failure. The global prevalence of fatty liver disease is estimated at 24%, with the highest rates in Latin America.



Dr. Cobos calls it a day.

Meet Dr. Manuel Cobos, transplant surgeon in Argentina and alumnus of #NextGenScience program.
#AccessInAction

Open resources at Novartis help drive innovation

With help from Novartis, an Argentinian researcher was able to begin his search for a new medicine for tuberculosis.

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List of links present in page

1. <https://dev.arctic.novartis.com/stories/meet-manuel-cobos-transplant-surgeon-and-researcher>
2. <https://dev.arctic.novartis.com/tags/category/access-healthcare>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTJeCRb1VJw>
4. <https://dev.arctic.novartis.com/stories/open-resources-novartis-help-drive-innovation>