



STICHTING VRIENDEN VAN ARIE

Asociación para la Rehabilitación del Infantil Excepcional

Lima, Peru

Keylor Quiñonez

Keylor is now 5 years old. He was first seen by ARIE two years ago and diagnosed with autism and mental retardation. His parents are hardworking people. Father is a mechanic, mother assists in a pharmacy. They are dedicated to the well-being of Keylor and his brother. They live in a single, rented room in a poor part of Lima. Keylor goes to nursery school and day care, but requires extensive therapies in learning ability, language, behaviour and occupational, for which he comes to ARIE various times a week. Thanks to the total commitment of his parents, this arduous schedule is maintained and he makes slow, but certain progress. His parents pay nearly 50% of the costs, the rest is absorbed by ARIE and by contributions.



Dr Rivera retiring after 22 years

We are very happy and proud to report that ARIE is back at the pre-pandemic level. More than 6,000 children receive again one or more therapies every week. At a little over 300, staff level is also back at where it was in 2019 and training programmes have been resumed.

Now that things are more or less back to normal, it was decided to implement the succession planning, which was put on hold during the pandemic. After 22 years of dedicated service to ARIE, Dr Hector Rivera will retire at the end of the year. During those 22 years Dr Rivera was the Director General of ARIE. Under his leadership ARIE has attended to tens of thousands of children, has grown from 92,000 to an expected 450,000 therapies this year and has become recognized in Peru as the leading quality organization in its field. A good moment to have an interview with him.





Matthew Bernabé

Matthew is now four years old. Complications during his caesarean delivery, resulted in a very difficult first year and a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy with left hemiparesis, strabismus and low vision in the right eye. He started off by receiving therapies in government hospitals and was first seen by ARIE at age two. He lives with his mother at the house of her parents. Mother works three days a week in a retail shop. Father has abandoned them, although he does send monthly some money. His mother, or sometimes the grandfather takes the boy to ARIE twice a week to receive therapies in language, physio, hydro and occupational.

Like nearly all children he loves being in the water during the hydrotherapy and the more harmonious movements this facilitates. Progress is very slow, but the mother makes every effort that Matthew receives his therapies. She pays around 1/3 of the cost of treatment, the rest is absorbed by ARIE and by contributions.

Dr Rivera, can you tell us something about yourself before you joined ARIE in 2001?

My wife, Charo and I are both medical doctors. We met while studying at the University of San Marcos, where I graduated in 1984. We have three adult children, an engineer, a manager and a psychologist. In 1986 I began my specialization in Paediatrics. This led to work in a government hospital in the area of neonatology, it was a period of crisis for Peru. However, some colleagues and I managed to establish an Intensive Care Unit for new-borns. We received support from various sources, including pharmaceutical companies to obtain equipment and medication. In 1999 I began my training for specialization in Rehabilitation. My goal was to do paediatric rehabilitation. I wanted to help children who were left with sequelae. In 2001, when I was about to complete the 3-year training, my eyes caught an advertisement by ARIE.

In fact then, what made you accept ARIE's offer to become Director General?

Most importantly, ARIE's goals were in line with my professional and personal goals. I saw the potential of ARIE as a respected medical organization with a strong human focus. I was inspired by Lucia Claux, who as the founder of ARIE had the ideal of providing treatment to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. To work with a team of therapists, at that time there were only two other doctors. And an organization supported by enthusiastic volunteers and actively involved benefactors from outside Peru.



So, after all those years, what do you consider to be your main achievements?

In fact, I am proud of what has been achieved. Not by me personally, but by ARIE as a team, as a family. We are recognized as the leading organization in child rehabilitation in Peru, and in certain disciplines also across Latin America. It still makes me happy when I walk the halls of our centres to watch the children progress, while being treated by the therapists and grateful parents looking on. That has been achieved through a rigorous training program for our people. We concluded agreements with leading universities in Peru and also with the University of South Florida, Tampa. Quality in everything we do is guaranteed by ISO certification. Important steps on the administrative side have been the implementation of a system to manage the 6 locations of the institution, the digitization of medical records and the implementation of telemedicine. The latter was essential when we could only do online therapies during the COVID pandemic. In the design and construction of our latest centre in San Juan de Lurigancho, which opened in 2017, we were able to realize our vision of a state-of-the-art facility. The financial support we received from The Netherlands for the construction and acquisition of equipment has been super important.

Very impressive, but you must also have experienced frustration and disappointments.

Frustration and challenges yes, but in all those years I was never disappointed. When I started, financial management and infrastructure required a lot of attention. Two areas in which at the time I had little or no experience. There were many human resources problems and each audit generated many points to correct. But I have been fortunate to receive the help and support of the Supervisory Board and the Dutch 'Friends of ARIE'. On the medical side, one of the most challenging situations is how to manage parents' expectations. Of course, they only want the best for their children, but there comes a time when further treatment will not produce further improvement. Very difficult to accept. The COVID pandemic was a difficult period. From one day to the next we had to adjust the organization, which resulted in real hardship for many people. Thankfully, all of that is behind us and we're back at the pre-COVID level of activity.



One last question Dr Rivera, what are your plans once you have left ARIE?

First of all, I'll be available for anything ARIE wants me to do. In addition, I have several plans such as: writing a novel set in the Peruvian medical profession; improve my foreign languages, in particular Italian and, finally, support small and medium-sized organizations in the health sector as a consultant. It will be a change, but I'm looking forward to it.

Thank you very much Dr Rivera for this interview and everything you have done for ARIE. GOOD LUCK!

Dr Rivera will be succeeded by Dra Maria del Carmen Rodriguez on the medical and Johanna Susfalich on the management side. We wish them much success!

Committee changes

Last but not least, you should be informed that after more than 20 years on the committee of 'Friends of ARIE' Boudewijn Bolle and Melanie Ruys have stepped down at the end of last year. We are extremely grateful for the significant contribution they have made to the success of ARIE. Their places have been taken by Roderik Bolle (son of Boudewijn) and Selina van Panhuys, daughter of Alexander and Carola.

Founder

Carola Beelaerts van Blokland

Committee

Alexander Beelaerts van Blokland

Ton Spoor

Roderik Bolle

Margot Kraijenhoff

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