

'Hands That Heal' To Those Who Need It Most

Doctors of the future of UCF enable homeless clinic in Orlando

ORLANDO- Once a month, medical students arrive in downtown Orlando with a mission of love they confess, it is part of their vocation as future doctors.

Part of their academic training as volunteer students at the University of Central Florida (UCF) is to provide medical services to the most unfortunate who suffer from skin diseases or show injuries.

"We do not ask for identification or income, everyone who arrives receives specialized care," said Jorge Trilles, one of the volunteer students at the medical school.

There, in the parking lot of a church, they set up a tent and an outdoor ambulatory clinic where hundreds of people have received health care since last year, some tips to avoid other skin afflictions and some human compassion.

Orlando has approximately two thousand homeless sleeping in its streets. Most of them do not have access to medical insurance and many live in abandoned buildings, forested areas, parks and street corners. For this reason, they are prone to develop skin diseases such as dermatitis, burns and fungi.

“We have already created a relationship of trust with some of our patients. They feel that there are people who care about them, their well-being and their health,” added Trilles, one of the founding members of the Chapman Compassionate Care clinic.

According to Dr. Analia Castiglioni, an associate professor at the UCF medical school, students have provided about 192 injections to treat Hepatitis A. This means that students have vaccinated 10% of the homeless population in the Orange County

This initiative is carried out in partnership with the Florida Orange County Health Department.

The vaccine effort arises when an outbreak of Hepatitis A was reported in the state of Florida at the end of 2019. The state reported that Florida is going through a health emergency with an increase of more than three thousand cases of the disease compared to 550 registered in 2018 and 280 in 2017.

In Orange County, 183 infections were reported last year, a double increase compared to the previous year. More than 70 percent of those affected have been hospitalized and about 51 deaths have been reported.

"It is important to note that these services are available to the entire population, not only the population at risk as homeless, but also for those who do not have health insurance," Castiglioni said.