
Amid US Blockade, Cuba Opens Robotic Surgery Center

23/03/2017



The current U.S. blockade against Cuba prevents the socialist country from buying necessary robotic surgery equipment.

Cuba's Ministry of Public Health announced Wednesday the opening of a professional training center for the use of robotics in medical treatment.

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Cuban doctors lauded the opening of the center, given that it is virtually impossible for the socialist island to acquire the latest technology in this field. The only firm that sells necessary equipment for robotic surgery is based in the U.S., preventing Cuba from purchasing them because of the United States' illegal blockade.

Since the early years of the triumph of Cuban Revolution in 1959, the U.S. has prohibited companies from selling products to Cuba, except in extremely limited circumstances. Despite not being able to immediately purchase the equipment,

Cuban doctors are studying how to use them in preparation for future possession.

"We have contacted them (the U.S.). We have all the economic resources and the support of our government to obtain the equipment, but our efforts have been in vain," Dr. Julian Francisco Ruiz Torres told Granma. Ruiz is in charge of overseeing Cuba's first robotic surgery center.

"Nevertheless, we are training Cuban professionals in this type of technology so that, as soon as the first set of equipment enters the country, it can be put into operation and treat diseases affecting our population."

The training center, set to open on March 27, in Havana received a large investment from the ruling Communist Party to repair and modernize surgical equipment.

"This provides greater comfort for patients and workers, a better service to the population and an increase in the number of surgeries to solve different health problems," Dr. Ruiz also said.

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Preparing for robotic surgery is yet another major accomplishment for the socialist country's progressive health system. Medical scientists in Cuba are also undertaking phase one of a clinical trial for a vaccine to help improve the health of people who are HIV-positive, Cuban media reported last month.

The vaccine, TERA-VAC-VIH, while not intended to give patients a cure for HIV, allows patients to improve their quality of life by reducing the amount of HIV in a patient's blood, known as the viral load. The long-term project will go through several more testing phases to determine if it should continue.

Socialist Cuba's medical system has trained more than 80,000 doctors from across the world, teaching them how to prevent and treat diverse types of diseases.