



# Heart to Heart Global Cardiac Care

SITE: SAENZ NATIONAL  
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL  
LOCATION: SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA  
COLLABORATION LAUNCHED: 2021

*Measurably Expanding Access Since 1989*

MARCH 8–19, 2022  
CARDIAC TRAINING MISSION 2  
PATIENT STORY



*“We wish the best for our son. That he can be a healthy child with love for life. We hope he does not lose his strong spirit, his bravery, and that he becomes a good man who always takes care of his health.”*

– REBECA AND MARVIN, ALONSO'S PARENTS

## HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY

Nine-year-old Alonso lives in San Jose, Costa Rica with his parents and twin brother, Andres. His mother, Rebeca, is a stay-at-home mom and his father, Marvin, a surgical assistant in ophthalmology.

Although his parents try their best not to let Alonso's heart condition hold him back, they see him tire out quickly when playing with his brother. His mother shares, “Alonso really likes running. But when he runs a lot, he gets tired and breathes very hard. He'll say to his brother, ‘Wait for me!’ He can't join sports teams as he would like to.”

## CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT AND MEDICAL HISTORY

Alonso was diagnosed with aortic stenosis just two days after he and his twin brother were born through an emergency Cesarean. His mother's condition was unstable due to the difficult births and she did not learn of Alonso's diagnosis for some time.

Alonso's parents were terrified when they learned of his heart condition – their first child had died from a congenital heart defect at three days of age. “We immediately thought, ‘Oh no, it's going to happen again!’ And we went back in time to the sadness that we endured with the death of our first baby.”

After Alonso's initial diagnosis, the family traveled to Saenz National Children's Hospital every two months so his heart condition could be monitored. When he was seven months old, he underwent a balloon aortic valvuloplasty (a catheter-based intervention to increase blood flow through his narrow aortic valve) and returned for check-ups every four months. Over time, Alonso's aortic valve began to leak more and more. In 2020, the cardiac team at Saenz had already introduced the possibility of open heart surgery. Unfortunately, the volume of open heart procedures had to be drastically reduced at Saenz due to the number of PICU beds occupied by Covid-19 patients. Alonso's surgery had to be put on hold.

## CURRENT CONDITION

On March 15, 2022, the joint Heart to Heart-Saenz team successfully operated on Alonso. The team performed the Ross Procedure to correct his aortic insufficiency.

His operation and recovery both went smoothly and Alonso was discharged from the PICU just two days after surgery! He was calm and smiling while his parents visited the PICU and flashed us a thumbs-up before heading home.

## PATIENT PROFILE

Child	Alonso A.
Age	9 years old
DOB	July 8, 2012
Home	San Jose, Costa Rica
Parents	Rebeca and Marvin
Diagnosis	Severe aortic valve insufficiency; s/p balloon aortic valvuloplasty (2013, Costa Rica)
Open heart surgery	Ross Procedure (March 15, 2022)
Discharged from PICU	March 17, 2022

*Based on an interview conducted in Spanish by Lucie Everett, Heart to Heart staff.*