

Needy patient is given hope for 'different life' after surgery for tumor

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Silvestre Torres, 27, had the skeletal look of a POW when he extended a hand in greeting from his bed at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center.

His grip was unexpectedly firm, and he said "hello" in Spanish with clarity. Not bad for a fellow who had a brain tumor so rare that it isn't even assigned a rate of incidence.

When he was examined in Puerto Penasco, Sonora, in March by a Phoenix physician who vacations there, Torres was close to death.

He was 60 pounds underweight; his body-temperature control mechanism was failing, he was urinating so frequently that he was dehydrated and his electrolyte balance was disrupted; and his vision was fading. His problems were compounded by poverty.

Dr. Carlos F. Salazar, the Phoenix physician, couldn't turn his back on Torres.

Salazar said he went to Torres' house, "and I suggested that he had a brain tumor."

"I told the family that the only thing I could do is take tests and talk to my friends in Phoenix at St. Joseph's and see what we can do," he added. "The next weekend, I went back and brought him to the hospital."

Torres was admitted to St. Joseph's as a charity-care patient. Physicians donated their skills and the hospital is footing the medical bills.

Mary Ellen Mussman, a social worker at St. Joseph's
— Patient, B2



Peter Schwepker / Republic

Drs. Carlos F. Salazar (right) and Volker Sonntag examine Silvestre Torres. Sonntag said Torres' tumor was "the size of a plum."