

**Hospital Material Recovery Programs**  
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*Sharing surplus.  
 Saving lives.*

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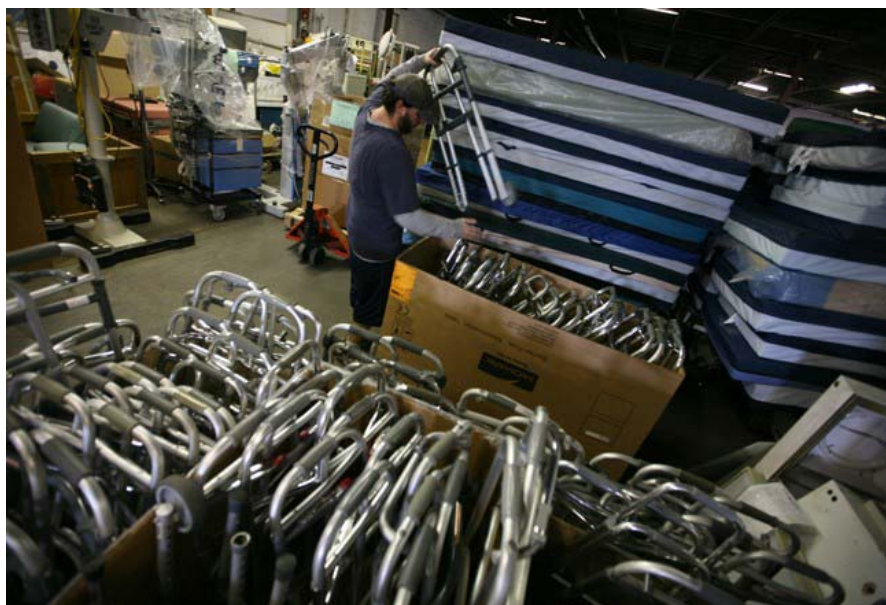
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**GLOBAL LINKS PARTNERS WITH PITTSBURGH-AREA HOSPITALS TO  
 DIRECT SURPLUS TO OVERSEAS CLINICS**

Just four miles from Pittsburgh’s Convention Center, the world’s first and largest green convention center, an international nonprofit Global Links is making its green mark on the environment and healthcare worldwide. For 20 years, Global Links has recovered unused medical supplies, surplus medical equipment, and furnishings from U.S. hospitals and redirected these valuable medical materials to chronically underfunded hospitals and clinics in developing countries—facilities where even sterile surgical gloves are often washed and reused.

“From the smallest surgical suture to complex intensive care unit equipment, we gather, assess, reprocess and deliver materials to program hospitals in nine countries,” explained Kathleen Hower, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Global Links. “These items will serve a valuable second life and keep them from needlessly entering our landfills and incinerators.” Last year, the organization recovered 50 tons of medical supplies and 150 tons of medical equipment and furnishings, and shipped 25 sea containers of aid to Bolivia, Cuba, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic.

Medical surplus occurs due to multiple reasons such as changes in vendors, advances in technology and treatments, renovating, and downsizing. It is estimated that each year, more than 2,000 tons of unused medical supplies, valued at more than \$200 million, are thrown away from U.S. hospital operating rooms alone. Since 1989, Global Links has helped U.S. hospitals to develop environmentally-sound and responsible processes for managing surplus medical materials.



*Surplus medical supplies, equipment and furnishings are collected, prepared and stored in Global Links’ 23,000 square foot warehouse in Pittsburgh, PA before being sent to hospitals throughout Latin America.*

Although Global Links works with hospitals across the nation, its biggest supporters are Pittsburgh-based and western Pennsylvania hospitals. These hospitals include Jefferson Regional Medical Center, St. Clair Hospital, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) network of hospitals, including Magee Womens Hospital, Passavant, Presbyterian-Shadyside, St. Margaret, Mercy, Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh, and hospitals in the West Penn Allegheny Health System.

See how these hospitals are at the forefront of improving global health while improving their environmental stewardship:

### **University of Pittsburgh Medical Center**

One of the most common pieces of hospital equipment is the intravenous (IV) pole. But in developing countries, even the most basic medical supplies are often lacking. Family members often hold a patient’s IV line and medication. Or, a bag of IV fluid is tacked to the wall, restricting the patient’s mobility and comfort.

When the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) recently upgraded IV equipment, it donated 3,000 IV poles for the benefit of hospitals in Global Links’ nine program countries.

Global Links works closely with UPMC to inform all hospital staff of the environmentally responsible alternative to disposal of still-useful items. This collaboration allows UPMC to be a greener health system that produces less waste and to help patients worldwide. Due to these efforts, thousands of IV poles were saved from a landfill and instead helped to meet the critical needs of patients in developing countries.



*Global Links volunteers clean and repaint 3,000 IV poles donated by University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.*

“We’ve already received feedback from our partner hospitals overseas that patients are more comfortable and the busy medical staff are so grateful for the convenience this simple object provides,” described Hower.

### **Allegheny General Hospital Suburban Campus**

Due to the merger between Suburban General Hospital and Allegheny General Hospital (AGH), consolidation and reorganization efforts provided additional opportunities for donations. Because the newly named AGH-Suburban Campus upgraded the level of orthopaedic care offered at the facility, older equipment including orthopaedic tools and screws were sent to Global Links. These specialized tools are not often available and will greatly enhance patient care in often sparsely equipped clinics.

In addition, AGH-Suburban donated hundreds of surplus surgical suture, a necessity for any operation. In developing countries, patients are often asked to purchase and bring their own suture to hospitals. In other cases where suture is not readily available, surgeons resort to using the incorrect type or size of suture, fishing line, or non-sterile thread, all of which can lead to increased risk of infection and slow patient recovery time. Global Links' Suture Program annually serves more than 80 hospitals in 30 countries worldwide. The suture donation from AGH-Suburban Campus will join the 1 million sutures distributed since the program was started in 1989.

### **Jefferson Regional Health Center of Pittsburgh**

Imagine working in a 180-bed facility where nearly 420 operations, 350 births and 2,500 emergency room visits are carried out monthly—without sufficient patient monitors to evaluate vital signs. This was the situation at the Hospital Regional de Cobán in Guatemala until an additional six refurbished patient monitors were sent from Global Links as a result of its partnership with Jefferson Regional Health Center of Pittsburgh.



*A nurse in Guatemala checks on her infant patient using a monitor donated by Jefferson Regional Medical Center.*

In addition to donating 18 patient monitors, Jefferson Regional offered the volunteer services of its clinical engineers to prepare the units for shipment. Working with Global Links, the volunteer engineers assisted with testing and refurbishment. “One key philosophy at Global Links is we only send equipment and supplies that are needed and we only send what we ourselves would use on a loved one,” explained Hower. “In the case of complex equipment like a patient monitor, we ensure that the voltage will be compatible with the recipient hospital, it is in working order, and all the accessories and manuals are included. It’s a disservice to burden a hospital in a developing country with a piece of equipment that isn’t going to be used. Our careful needs assessments and preparation ensure that all equipment is in good working condition and can be used immediately.” The other donated patient monitors are improving patient care in hospitals in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala.