



Maria Velasco hails from Catarama, Los Rios Province. At 63 she was suffering from morbid obesity. She weighed almost 400 pounds, 20 of which were attributed to an enormous tumor in her pubic area which kept her in great pain and prevented her from walking. This feisty woman underwent surgery and continues treatment, free of charge, at the Luis Vernaza Hospital thanks to La Junta de Beneficencia's intervention.

She is a dedicated housewife but at a given moment everything changed and her life became an ordeal. Maria steadily gained weight without taking notice until she could no longer walk or perform her daily chores.

In desperation, her daughter Mirna decided to ask for help from the News in the Community, an RTS Television program, given that her mother was ill and saddened, so she begged God that some good-hearted person would take pity and perform surgery on her. The outcry was received, and la Junta de Beneficencia de Guayaquil showed up immediately. Personnel from the Hospital Luis Vernaza traveled to Catarama in order to bring Maria to Guayaquil and have her condition evaluated by doctors at the Healthcare Center.

After undergoing several exams, Hospital doctors gave out the good news: Maria could be operated and would receive a gastric bypass which consisted of diminishing the size of the stomach for fast weight loss which, in turn, would allow for tumor removal.

"At Hospital Luis Vernaza I spent nothing on medicine, the operation, everything was free of

charge and I am still being attended to. Now I feel well, I´m happy and I was told I have to walk so I am being treated by a nutritionist and have lost 50 pounds already in a short span of time. I am very grateful to la Junta de Beneficencia de Guayaquil and to Hospital Luis Vernaza for their help and permanent collaboration and beseech God and the Virgin Mary to help them always", she concluded.