

# Don't cry for me Argentina – Just sob for your National Health Service!

By Our Man in Buenos Aires

Castle Comfort Centre director Keith Simpson explored his way into northern Argentina to get a first hand glimpse of healthcare standards in an extraordinary country that is economically and administratively completely destroyed. Ironically, it is a nation that has rich and vast natural wealth from agriculture to oil, precious metals, wine production and other manufacturing industries all successfully exporting. But it is so politically corrupt and badly managed that the despicably treated non-wealthy Argentines (the large majority) are hungry, in fact often starving, lack basic medical care and are frightened to demand their basic human rights for fear of igniting the return of a military dictatorship.

Instead of being, as it should be, a shining example to the rest of third world Latin America, this beautiful nation containing a dignified and proud people is now merely a symbol of suppression. Its considerable number of highly trained doctors (those who do not flee the country) are rarely able to practise their skills due to a famine of basic drugs and facilities.

Keith spent time at San Pedro, in the Jujuy province and visited the town hospital. Some pretty horrific cases were witnessed but typical was that of farm labourer Candido Quisp.

"This guy was screaming with pain continually" Keith explained. "He had been lying there for eight days with gallstones as big as golf balls needing urgent removal. "Due to the fact his employer hadn't passed on his social security



**The hospital main entrance affords easy access for the disabled - NOT!**

payments for years he had no right to national health cover so the hospital couldn't treat him. "Candido and his family were so poor that none of his children had been able to afford the bus fare from their village 60 kilometres away to come and visit him, let alone pay for the treatment. "A nurse explained that all the staff in the hospital had clubbed together to get the operation done there privately but were struggling to raise the anaesthetist's fees.

"I went to see the hospital administrators and made them pledge that if I paid the shortfall of 80 dollars (about £45) they would get the job done quickly. "They promised action rather unconvincingly, but I still gave them the cash. "The following day I returned and the guy was in a worse state - having had his hopes raised then told there would be a delay. "Again I was given reassurance the operation would go ahead the following morning. "I made sure I got back at daybreak to be told that they were all prepared but rain during the night had caused another postponement. "Rain? - apparently the anaesthetist's suit had been left outside to air and it got drenched.

"However, it was all eventually sorted out after another day's wait and Candido came through it all well. When he came round I realised that despite his post-op weakness he was unsuccessfully trying to grab my hand to say thanks. "He didn't need to do that - his moistening eyes expressed his gratitude and the tears shortly to appear on his cheeks were not for his beloved Argentina, but out of relief.

"All that went through my mind at that point was that I needed everyone in North Staffordshire to know about this," concluded Keith, "because we just don't know how lucky we really are."



**FALKLANDS FORGOTTEN - A victorious Argentine, a happy English traveller and an unwanted gallstone!**