

# ANGELA'S JOURNEY

## THE POWER OF THE RIPPLE EFFECT



Angela Barrero with her ICU care team. 2021.

In October 2020, what should have been a joyous day for Angela Barrero and her family turned into a nightmare. Celebrating their move into a new home in Tunja, Boyacá, Colombia, Angela was engulfed in flames after an accident with an ethanol fireplace. The burns covered 70-80% of her body, leaving her in a life-threatening condition. After initial treatment in Tunja, Angela was transferred to the burn unit at Hospital Simón Bolívar in Bogotá, where she was treated by the Physicians For Peace (PFP) trained medical team and her battle for survival truly began.

"The first 48 hours are critical for any burn patient," Angela recalls. "I was in a coma, sedated for the pain, and even suffered a serious heart complication due to the severity of my burns. The medical team in Tunja did everything they could to stabilize me, but they quickly realized that I needed specialized care. It became clear that my best chance of survival was to be transferred to a facility with a highly trained team as quickly as possible. That's when my journey to Bogotá began."

### Angela Patricia Barrera

Public Accountant, Specialist in Administration & Tax Auditing



### The FIGHT for RECOVERY

Upon arrival at Hospital Simón Bolívar, Angela's condition was dire. Dr. Patricia de Reyes, a PFP partner surgeon in the hospital's burn unit, took charge of her care. "Angela's case was one of the most severe we had seen," says Dr. Patricia. "Her injuries required not just immediate life-saving interventions but also a long-term, multidisciplinary approach to ensure her recovery."

The hospital's burn unit, **supported by training from PFP**, has become a **center of excellence** in Colombia.



**Dr. Patricia Gutierrez**  
Plastic Surgeon at Hospital Simon Bolivar, Bogotá DC.

Dr. Patricia reflects on the impact of PFP's involvement: "Our partnership with PFP has been transformative. Volunteer international medical educators brought advanced surgical techniques and materials, such as [skin substitutes], which are now standard in our care. These innovations have significantly improved patient outcomes."

### A Lifeline in REHABILITATION

Angela's road to recovery was long and arduous, marked by countless surgeries and intensive rehabilitation. Central to this process was Yinna Martinez, an occupational therapist trained through PFP's education, training and mentorship. Yinna worked closely with Angela, guiding her through the physical and emotional challenges of rehabilitation.



**Yinna Martinez**  
Occupational therapist. at Hospital Simon Bolivar,

Colombian Context

Colombia faces a severe burn injury crisis, with thousands of people, primarily children and women, suffering severe burns annually, often within their homes. Partnering with Hospital Simón Bolívar since 2012, Physicians for Peace (PFP) has been deeply committed to addressing this issue. We're not only advancing burn care through specialized medical training but also actively supporting burn prevention initiatives. By educating communities and healthcare providers, we aim to reduce the incidence of these preventable injuries and improve outcomes for those affected.





Angela Barrero: Comparative images showcasing early intervention and recovery progress, 2020 - 2024.

"Angela's case was one of the most challenging I've faced," Yinna shares. "She arrived with extensive injuries, barely able to move. Our daily therapy sessions were grueling, but Angela's determination was unwavering. Every day, we set new goals. By the time she was discharged, Angela could walk out of the hospital on her own—a milestone that seemed impossible at the start."

Yinna's dedication to Angela's recovery is a testament to the power of specialized training. "Angela taught me that rehabilitation is not just about physical recovery; it's about the strength of the human spirit. There were moments when the pain seemed too much for her to bear, but together, we pushed through."

## The Ripple Effect

Angela's story is not just about her personal recovery; it is also a reflection of the broader impact of PFP's training programs. Yinna, who played such a crucial role in Angela's rehabilitation, was herself trained by PFP. Her expertise has been passed on to others, creating a ripple effect that continues to benefit burn patients across Colombia.

### Paola Poveda

Physical Therapist at Hospital Simon Bolivar.



Paola Poveda, a physical therapist trained by Yinna, is now applying these advanced techniques to help burn survivors. "Constantly updating our rehabilitation techniques has been crucial," Paola explains. "Being trained by Yinna was like opening up a new world of possibilities in burn care. Thanks to her guidance and the training opportunities provided by PFP, I can now help my patients regain their lives."

Paola's story highlights the ripple effect of our training. Each healthcare professional we train, not only enhances their skills, but trains others. As Paola says, "The motto of PFP—to teach one and heal many—is truly reflected in our work".

## Continuing the Mission

Our work is far from over. To sustain progress in burn care, we're dedicated to ongoing training and partnerships in Colombia. By empowering local healthcare providers, we're building a lasting legacy of healing and hope.

## A Community of Healing

Angela's journey is closely connected with the work of Yinna, Paola, and Dr. Patricia, highlighting the profound impact that training and collaboration can have on a healthcare system. The introduction of advanced treatments, such as specialized skin grafts and protective face masks, facilitated by PFP's work and network, has significantly improved the recovery of patients like Angela at Hospital Simón Bolívar.

"The knowledge and skills we've gained through our collaboration with PFP have made our burn unit a center of excellence," Dr. Patricia notes.

"We've become a reference point for burn care across Latin America, and that's something we're incredibly proud of."

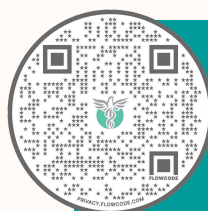


Yinna Martinez, Paola Poveda & Patricia Guitierrez. 2024.

## A New Chapter

As Angela looks back on her journey, she reflects on the importance of the care she received: "The therapists at Hospital Simón Bolívar taught me that scars are not just physical; they are emotional and spiritual. My recovery was not just about healing my body, but about rebuilding my life. I'm grateful to the team that stood by me every step of the way. They didn't just save my life; they gave me back my future."

Angela's story is a powerful reminder of the impact that dedicated healthcare professionals can have when equipped with the right training and support. Through the effort of PFP, a growing network of knowledge and care continues to grow, touching lives across Colombia and beyond.



Join us in creating a **ripple effect** of healing. Support our work by donating to our **Global Healing Circle** and help us build a healthier, more equitable world—one life at a time.