



**Media Contact:**  
Sylvie Patrick  
AXA Assistance USA  
+ 1.312.935.3522  
[Sylvie.Patrick@axa-assistance.com](mailto:Sylvie.Patrick@axa-assistance.com)

## **AXA Assistance USA, Inc. Providing Critical Care to UK Tourists During Stomach Virus Outbreak at Bahia Principe Puerto Plata resort in Rio San Juan, Dominican Republic**

**9 August 2007 – London. UK** AXA Assistance USA is providing critical care to more than 73 British and Irish tourists who have fallen ill due to a stomach virus outbreak at the Bahia Principe Puerto Plata Resort in the Dominican Republic. More than 300 guests have been affected since Wednesday August 8<sup>th</sup> and more than 40 have been hospitalized.

At 06:10am Sunday (August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007), assistance coordinators at AXA Assistance USA, Inc. started to receive a stream of phone calls from our customers in Puerto Plata reporting medical symptoms of gastroenteritis. In the past 72 hours, our team has provided assistance to more than 70 of our British and Irish customer's medical cases of similar symptoms of nausea, vomiting and diarrhea complaints, originating from the Grande Bahia. The Bahia Principe Rio San Juan, a 4-star resort with more than 2,000 occupant capacity in the Dominican Republic, has been overwhelmed with the of this outbreak. And shut down last Monday August 6<sup>th</sup>.

AXA Assistance USA initiated the "Blue Light" protocol, alerting the medical and operation departments to channel resources immediately to provide timely assistance and support to its customers in Puerto Plata.

The Hospiten Clinic Assist is the only medical facility in the vicinity and is typically only staffed to handle minor ambulatory cases. Medical staffs from surrounding medical centers have arrived to assist in caring for these patients - some of whom required intravenous fluid infusion and antibiotic administration in their hotel rooms.

AXA Assistance International Medical Director, Dr. Cai Glushak immediately organized a team of experienced infectious disease and emergency medicine clinicians, and assistance coordinators to attend to this crisis on the ground. This team arrived on site Tuesday, August 7th and includes a physician, a nurse, and an international assistance coordinator.

AXA Assistance USA's communication task force has alerted the appropriate regulatory agencies including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health organization (WHO), and the United Kingdom (UK) embassy in the Dominican Republic in regards to this gastroenteritis outbreak development.

The medical staff at the resort is allowing a 2-hour window to wait and see if the patients have progressed. Additional medical personnel including pediatricians are being assembled to assist. The Dominican Republic Health Inspector is on the ground to inspect the food and water The UK Federation of Tourism representative attended the scene and has already returned to the UK. Cultures have come back negative, however medical professionals think the outbreak is due to a virus.

The AXA Assistance USA team on the ground in Puerto Plata report that the biggest issues are operational due to the clinic having only one phone, so the hotel staff has been sending patients back to their rooms to call their insurance companies. To avoid this issue and assist its customers, AXA Assistance USA coordinator is providing claim forms and customer service



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support to file new cases. AXA Assistance USA is receiving the forms via fax and opening cases immediately.

The AXA Assistance USA team of medical professionals will be returning to the U.S. this evening, as they determined the current situation is now under control and customers are being attended to in a timely manner.

AXA Assistance USA will continue to update the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the World Health organization (WHO), and the United Kingdom (UK) embassy in the Dominican Republic with more news as we receive it.

**About AXA Assistance**

AXA Assistance USA provides travel, medical and lifestyle assistance to its customers, both individuals and businesses while they are traveling in the United States and Caribbean.

AXA Assistance provides the most extensive worldwide network and the most comprehensive service capabilities in the business whether it's reducing the friction of everyday life, handling extraordinary situations or saving lives. For more information on AXA Assistance USA please visit <http://www.axa-assistance-usa.com/>

AXA Assistance is headquartered in Paris, France and is a wholly owned subsidiary of AXA, one of the world's largest insurance groups. AXA Assistance, founded in 1959 was one of the first assistance companies to open its doors. For more information on AXA Assistance please visit: <http://www.axa-assistance.com/>

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