



Canada-Guyana Outreach Mission

Health Care for Guyana

REPORT OF THE 2014 MISSION TO GUYANA

Pre-Mission Visits by the Organizing Team

On August 29, 2014, Conrad Joseph and Yvonne Joseph Triesman, two members of Canada-Guyana Outreach Mission's (a.k.a. *CanGO*) Organizing Team, left Toronto for Guyana. Our task was to finalize plans for the upcoming mission. Also on that flight were Marleen (Annie) Joseph and Judy Harrison, two members of *CanGO*'s team. On August 30, 2014, Dr. Lorraine Emeghebo, Associate Professor of Nursing from Molloy College arrived from New York.

From September 1 – 5, *CanGO*'s organizing team and Dr. Lorraine Emeghebo visited the Prime Minister, Hon. Samuel Hinds, the Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, Hon. Jennifer Webster, the Advisor to the President, Ms. Gail Teixeira, Director General of International Affairs, Mrs. Elisabeth Harper, and the Head of the Diaspora, Mrs. Anyin Choo, by whom we were warmly welcomed. Although we had an appointment with the Minister of Health, Dr. Bheri Ramsaran, he was unfortunately detained at a meeting with the Prime Minister. At these meetings we discussed the vision of our organization and asked about their particular concerns regarding the healthcare needs of the people of Guyana.

Remaining Members of the *CanGO* Team Arrive in Guyana

On September 6, Chandra Chunilall (Nurse), Noel Denny (member of the Organizing Committee), Dr. Joyce Dobbertin (Family Physician), Deborah Drake (Nurse), Dr. Anne Galante (Gynaecologist), Diane McGrenere (Social Worker), Dr. Clare Mitchell (Pediatrician), Linnet Mohabeer (Nurse), Dr. Andrew Morrissey (Otolaryngologist), Dr. Ellis Scott (Otolaryngologist), Dianne Scott (Nurse and Audiology Technician), Dr. Leigh Sowerby (Otolaryngologist), Lorraine Von Eeden (Nurse/Practitioner), and Lezlie Woods Grizzle (Nurse) arrived in Guyana from Alberta, Toronto, Vermont and New York. Another member of our team, John Placid (Nurse) had travelled to Guyana a few weeks previously to visit relatives before joining us. All members were welcomed by a Customs Officer on the tarmac at the Cheddi Jagan International Airport and ushered through Customs without having to join the long lines. They were then transported to Project DAWN in Lilliendaal by bus. This vehicle, complete with driver (Darren Manbodh), was on loan to us for the week from the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security.

Clinic at Charity

On Sunday, September 7, the *CanGO* team left Georgetown for the trip to Charity. The ferry ride across the Essequibo River was relaxing and everyone enjoyed the scenery along the way. On arrival in Charity, we booked into the WD's Hotel and Mall where we had the entire hotel to ourselves (*CanGO* reserved all the rooms).

At 6:30 a.m. on Monday, September 8, the team had a very delicious breakfast after which we walked over to the Oscar Joseph District Hospital (OJDH) to begin our work. For the two days (September 8 & 9) that we worked at the OJDH, we had 376 patient visits. At this location we saw patients, not only from Charity and areas along the Essequibo coast, but also from Amerindian settlements up and down the Pomeroon River. These Amerindians have very limited access to healthcare. We encountered a few very sick patients who had to

be referred to the Suddie Hospital and a few to Georgetown Public Hospital for specific tests and follow-up treatment.

Clinic at Mahaicony

After our trip from Charity to Lilliendaal on Wednesday and our rest day on Thursday (trip to Kaieteur & Orindiuk Falls), on Friday, September 12, we travelled to Mahaicony where a large crowd of patients was awaiting our arrival at the Mahaicony Cottage Hospital. We worked for 11 hours at this hospital and had 147 patient visits. Unfortunately, we had to turn patients away as we were totally exhausted and had to get back to Lilliendaal. At the debriefing meeting that evening, it was the consensus of the team that the health needs of the patients in this community were reasonably well met.

Clinic at Project DAWN

To end this very hectic week, on Saturday, September 13, we had a half day clinic at Project DAWN in Lilliendaal. This clinic was mainly to provide healthcare to the people of Lilliendaal, Sophia and surrounding areas. During the 3-hour clinic, 48 patients were seen by the physicians who were available (some physicians had departed the previous day).

Other Initiatives

In addition to running clinics in the various areas, some of our members (Dr. Lorraine Emeghebo, Dr. Clare Mitchell and Dr. Leigh Sowerby) were pursuing other health care initiatives in Guyana.

Nursing Education in Guyana

As a Nurse Educator, Dr. Lorraine Emeghebo is interested in the quality of Nursing Education in Guyana, especially in light of the poor performance on the recent nursing exam. She arrived early to investigate how nursing is taught and to collaborate with the nurse educators in the nursing schools. In order to accomplish that, she needed to meet with the key players to obtain access to the educators. In addition to the meetings with the different ministries, Dr. Emeghebo also met with Ms. Cleopatra Barkoye, (Principal Nursing Tutor at Georgetown School of Nursing). The meetings gave her a clearer idea of the needs of nursing students in Guyana. She hopes to design a program to educate nurse leaders in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program at The University of Guyana on how to teach nursing students. Her goal is to develop a Continuing Education learning model whereby future teachers could be trained to educate the next generation of nurse leaders. This Program would eventually create a database so that the University of Guyana can add this to their curriculum.

Developmental Pediatrics

Prior to the 2014 mission, through her work in Medical Education, Dr. Clare Mitchell had made connections with two additional groups in Guyana. The first is the **Guyana Pediatric Residency Program** which is intended to train three Guyanese doctors over a three year time frame, to become Pediatricians in Guyana. The program is conducted in Guyana primarily by faculty from Canada (Pediatric Associates) who work closely with the Pediatric Consultants in Guyana (<http://www.guyanapediatrics.com>)

On Wednesday, September 10, Dr. Mitchell met with the Chief Pediatric Resident at Georgetown Hospital, had a tour of the facilities and has been in contact with the Canadian faculty both before and after the *CanGO* Mission. The plan is to contribute to the curriculum in her specialty of Developmental Pediatrics, in collaboration with the group from McMaster University, University of Toronto and Western University in order to build a sustainable group of Pediatricians in Guyana who can meet the many health care needs of Guyanese children.

A separate visit was made to the Georgetown Rehabilitation Centre for Children with developmental disorders: the **Ptolemy Reid Centre** (www.ptolemyreid.org.gy). This Centre provides treatment for children with

developmental disorders and autism. There is an on-site school and services for up to 30 residential placements. There is a large outpatient clinic which sees in excess of 100 outpatients per year. The need for developmental follow-up is expected to increase with the addition of a tertiary level Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Georgetown Hospital in 2012 and subsequently in other local hospitals (www.guyanahelpthekids.com). At this time there is no physician attached to the Ptolemy Reid Centre. Dr. Mitchell has been in further contact with the administrator of the Ptolemy Reid Centre in the hope of future collaboration as part of the *CanGO's* clinical work.

Training Program in Otolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery

While the rest of *CanGO's* team was running clinics in Charity, Mahaicony and Lillendaal, Dr. Leigh Sowerby was pursuing two initiatives in Georgetown. The first initiative was to lay the foundation to build a training program in Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery. To this end, three clinics and two OR days were held at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation. Seven patients ultimately had surgery and two local Otolaryngologists, Dr. Sharma and Dr. Legall, had the opportunity to experience operating with an endoscope, an instrument they had not previously used. Dr. Sowerby held several meetings with key players to help formulate and lay the foundation to build a training program in Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery.

National Hearing Screening Program

In partnership with Dr. Matthew Bromwich from the University of Ottawa and Clearwater Clinical, Dr. Sowerby also started work on a national hearing screening program for elementary school children. The system uses a new iPad-based screening test that can accurately identify individuals that need further testing. An application to Grand Challenges Canada is pending to help fund the project in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education in Guyana.

Next Mission

Our next mission is tentatively scheduled for the first week of November 2015. At that time, the team will concentrate on patients in Charity and communities on the Pomeroon River. The plan is to have the entire team run clinics in Charity. However, on the final 2 days, a few more adventurous members of the team will travel to remote locations up and/or down the Pomeroon River to provide health care to the patients in these areas. This, of course, will be coordinated through the Ministry of Health and Aboriginal Affairs.

While the Organizing Team was visiting the Medical Superintendent at Suddie Hospital, we learned that there is no Otolaryngologist on the Essequibo Coast. Therefore, any patient with major Ear, Nose or Throat issues has to be referred to the Georgetown Hospital. Consequently, we're planning to provide some ENT and other lectures to the local health care professionals on our next mission. This will also be coordinated through the Ministry of Health and the Chief Medical Officer of the Region.

In summary, we wish to thank the many donors who supported this mission. We also wish to thank the many volunteers, both in Canada and Guyana who have assisted us in making this mission a resounding success. And last, but certainly not least, we wish to thank the Government of Guyana for their warm welcome and for supporting us.

Respectfully submitted,



Yvonne Joseph Triesman, President
Canada-Guyana Outreach Mission

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