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## CARIBBEAN AFFAIRS

### Medical Mission Delegation brings Free Care and Surgery to Guyana along the Berbice Coast

By ALLISON SKEETE & Dr. BERMAN SAUNDERS

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*The OSHAG/C & CMM members as they were about to leave New York on October 17; consisted of Family Practitioner: Berman Saunders, Cardiologist: Dr. Trevor Atherley, Surgeons: Drs. Theophilus Lewis and Alves Lennox, Internists: Drs. Delores Gayle-Barton, Reynald Altema and James Cort, Optometrists: Drs. Andrea Harper and Winston Scott, Orthopedists: Drs. Ronald Daley and Isaac Fordyce, who specializes in Naturopathic/Nutrition for Cancer patients. The Registered Nurses of the delegation included RN's: Mavis Charles and Olga Chapman, Barbara Kendall, Waveney Luke, and Robert Fraser. The advocates and volunteers were Carol Bagot, Sybil Chester; William (Ossie) Kendall; Barbara Chase, Margaret Douglas and Marie Rose Douglas.*

The Organization for Social and Health Advancement in Guyana and the Caribbean (OSHAG/C) and the Caribbean Medical Mission of New Jersey (CMM) joined forces and led a delegation composed of 14 American, Guyanese, Barbadian and Jamaican physicians, surgeons, nurses, advocates, and volunteers on a medical and surgical mission recently to the Berbice County in Guyana. Carol Bagot, President of OSHAG/C and Dr. Berman Saunders, President of CMM, advocated the idea that their work opens the door to the successful treatment of many and helps getting infrastructure in place that establishes more opportunities for care to be provided to many.

Overall there was a feeling of gratification for having affected the lives of some in a beneficial way. As is always the case, the desire to do more was greater than the time and facilities permitted. The patients' response was stunning. They cooperated fully although members of the group were providing care and instructions in less than ideal circumstances.

Many thanks are due to the doctors, nurses, and other ancillary personnel from the various localities for their cooperation thus enabling the success of our group.

Our surgeons would like to express their appreciation to Drs. Tinney and Prasad at the New Amsterdam Hospital for allowing them to share their techniques and individual skills to the benefit of all involved. They experienced a feeling of accomplishment and are willing to return.

Our Ophthalmologists were grateful not only for the opportunity to provide hands-on care but also, and just as important, to educate. There were basic concerns which needed addressing. Among such concerns were the undertreatment of Glaucoma, since the newer drugs to treat this condition are very expensive, ii.) the hesitance to remove Cataracts which may be secondary to the fear of the necessary surgery and/or

knowledge of the improvements in sight to be gained and, iii.) the lack of basic reading glasses, a major problem for categories of individuals such as students, seamstresses, carpenters and vendors to name a few. Life could become more bearable and possibly easier with the relief of some of the conditions mentioned.

Our Primary Care Physicians thoroughly enjoyed their rapport with the local physicians, medics and nurses. Together they were able to diagnose, treat and educate their patients so as to optimize the patients' response. Many of the conditions encountered were similar to those that obtain in the "developed world." Consequently there existed a good opportunity for sharing management skills.

Our nurses also presented/held conferences on the various aspects of nursing. The information provided was well received. It is expected that patient care will benefit.

Our sub-specialists presented a series of three (3) CME lectures. These were well attended. The questions that followed indicated the interest of the participants. The subjects were (a) The Metabolic Syndrome (b) Acute Myocardial Infarction/Acute Coronary Syndrome and (c) Advancements in the treatment of Breast Disease.

Our Orthopedic Surgeon also provided services. To a certain extent he felt satisfied but was extremely worried that circumstances limited the full expression of his skills.

The concerted opinion of the members of the Caribbean Medical Mission (CMM) and the Organization for Social and Health Advancement for Guyana and the Caribbean (OSHAG) who collaborated on this trip was that the needy was indeed served.

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