

## Medical Mission 2014



The Guyana Georgetown Public Hospital hosted a training program in collaboration with the Organization for Social & Health Advancement in Guyana & The Caribbean (OSHAG) to upgrade the oncology and chemotherapy department of the hospital. The focus was to provide training to a group of registered nurses on safe chemotherapy administration, side effect management and patient education. The training was conducted by three accomplished nurses from Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Stacy Farrell, MSN, RN infusion nurse from Basking Ridge, NJ, Rose Mason, RN Vascular Access Team, and Leticia Smith, NP Breast Medicine Service Infusion Unit. Over the course of five days, twenty hours of training was provided and was well received by the nurses from 4 of the 10 regions within

Guyana. Dr. Trevor Layne, a Medical Oncologist from Lincoln Oncology in West Orange, NJ, lectured on the biology of cancer and presented a CME for the physicians on prostate cancer.

Organization for Social & Health Advancement in Guyana & The Caribbean provides health education and medical missions to Guyana. The organization attends yearly missions, and has collaborated with the Caribbean Medical Mission for the past five years to provide assistance to communities that are badly in need of health education and medical treatment.

Guyana, a country with an approximate population of 799,613 and 215,000 sq. km land mass, extends along the north–eastern coast of South America and shares borders with Venezuela, Brazil and Suriname. It has the distinction of being the only English-speaking country in the South American continent having been a former British territory. The World Health Organization report shows that Latin America and the Caribbean account for approximately 50% of cancer deaths in the Americas, although they account for 63% of the hemisphere’s population. Consequently, cancer has been one of the five leading causes of death recorded by the ministry of Guyana in the past 15 years.

Three major cancers affect the Guyanese population: breast, cervical and prostate. Afro-Guyanese men account for over 65% of prostate cancers. Among women, Indo-Guyanese presented with the most cases of breast cancer 45% while Afro-Guyanese had the majority of cervical cancer cases 39%. (Plummer, Persaud & Layne, 2009).

The medical mission was a humbling experience and we are willing to provide future assistance to countries like Guyana through OSHAG, as we recognize the need for safer and better patient outcomes within the oncology population. Our primary objectives of safe chemotherapy drug administration, side effect management and patient teaching were achieved. The citizens of Guyana are afforded free medical care by their government but quality oncology care is in its infancy. OSHAG and its volunteers have forged a relationship with the Ministry of Health to commit to maintaining and improving the quality of oncology standards within the country. Given the overwhelming support from the Ministry of Health and the government, OSHAG will continue to provide these important medical services.