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Local doctors get expert training

Tuesday, April 19 2011

A public/private sector collaboration is working to enhance the capability of doctors at public health facilities to treat persons with hand and shoulder injuries.

Caribbean Hand Centre (CHC) is working to build the skills of locals in areas such as splinting, and hand manipulation techniques. According to a release, "these techniques are designed to encourage and stimulate the hand and shoulder, lending support to the repair work done by the doctor."

In a recent interview with Newsday Orthopaedic Surgeon Dr Godfrey Araujo said hand and wrist training was provided to ten residents (doctors in training) who were recent graduates of the orthopaedics programme of the University of the West Indies. He said the training at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex (EWMSC), Mt Hope in January comprised lectures and interactive sessions. Sessions were to also include training using cadavers but Araujo said TT did not have a "process" for this to take place. He hopes that this type of training could occur possibly next year.

The young doctors also received training from renowned specialists in the treatment of hand and shoulder injuries – Dr Alejandro Badia; Dr Terry L Whipple, of Richmond Virginia, a pioneer in wrist surgery; and Dr Tyson Cobb, the director of the Hand Center of Excellence at Orthopaedic Specialists in Davenport, Iowa.

Badia has a close association with the CHC, as one of its collaborators. He is the Chief of Hand Surgery at Baptist Memorial Hospital, Miami, Florida.

"We invited him to share his knowledge and experience," Araujo said. The CHC was launched in January 2009. Araujo said the CHC operated in two ways – as a business providing hand rehabilitation services; and the Caribbean Hand Care Foundation which will be the non-profit side to assist persons who cannot afford hand rehabilitation. The foundation is currently seeking charitable status.

Explaining how Whipple and Cobb became involved in the training the young doctors at EWMSC, Araujo said he was doing a locum (someone who substitutes temporarily for another member of the same profession) at the EWMSC and Whipple and Cobb were guests of the CHC providing their service "pro bono" (voluntary/free of charge). He decided to utilise their expertise during his stint at Mt Hope and Cobb was given temporary registration and was able to do surgery at EWMSC and Port-of-Spain General Hospital. Cobb has indicated a willingness to be available next year. The CHC also plans to invite to TT an associate processor in plastic surgery specialising in congenital hand problems. Araujo said the visits were an opportunity for more training of locals and he hoped that there could be regular sessions.

CHC was started to promote the investigation, treatment and rehabilitation of hand and upper limb conditions in TT and wider Caribbean, for which there is a need, Araujo said.

The demand for care has been high among persons who sustained hand trauma injuries which were neglected or not treated properly. Araujo said, "People with injuries need small joint surgery not done by anyone else."

An injury of the wrist or hand can adversely impact on quality of life. Someone with a hand injury can have problems with simple everyday tasks such as pulling up their own zipper, or cleaning themselves. "Earning a living, holding a child, cooking a pot of food for your family. It's as simple as that," Araujo said.

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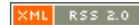
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