



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

ST. AUGUSTINE, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, WEST INDIES

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Welcome Remarks

Colposcopy Workshop

June 22 to June 26, 2009

Delivered By Deputy Principal

Monday June 22, 2009

Time: 9:00 am

Venue: Lecture Room, Mt. Hope Maternity Hospital

Salutations

CARICOM Health Secretariat Representative, Ms. Cassandra Harris;
His Excellency Fernando de la Serna, Ambassador of Spain to Trinidad and
Tobago;
Minister of Health, Honourable Gerry Narace
Dr. Anton Cumberbatch, Chief Medical Officer, Ministry of Health;
Professor Samuel Ramsewak, Dean, Faculty of Medical Sciences, UWI;
Representatives of CAREC,
Staff of the Mt. Hope Women's Hospital,
Students of the Faculty of Medical Sciences,
Local and overseas (Regional) participants, the Media, other invited guests

Ladies and gentlemen, participants, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the first ever Colposcopy Workshop to be hosted here at the Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus. On behalf of the

Campus Principal, Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Clement Sankat I extend a warm welcome. I would like to give a special welcome to our overseas visitors from Spain and other parts of the CARICOM region.

It is a pleasure for me as a woman to express the support of the University of the West Indies and this campus to this exercise; I understand that this procedure – Colposcopy has the potential to vastly simplify the process of cervical cancer identification facilitating early diagnosis and treatment with increased possibilities for cure at an early stage.

I am delighted that the Faculty of Medical Sciences of the UWI is collaborating with the Government of Spain and the CARICOM Secretariat in this important initiative. This is a critical initiative for the region where cancer is causing so much pain and suffering. For us all, such initiatives are a sign of hope for evading the suffering and grief which this illness brings.

“Cervical cancer [as most of us know] is the second most common cause of cancer deaths among Caribbean women.”¹ “The estimated incidence in the Caribbean in 2000 was 38.8/100.000, which placed the Caribbean among the top four sub-regions in the world. Data collected from CAREC’s Mortality Database indicate that cervical cancer was the second leading cause of cancer deaths among Caribbean women between 1991-1995”. Yet it is largely preventable, much more so than certain other types of cancer. Already the Caribbean Cooperation in Health (CCH) has noted that - mortality from invasive cervical

¹ Caribbean Framework for Developing National Screening and Clinical Guidelines for Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control: Caribbean Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control Project supported by PAHO Regional Cervical Cancer Project. P.1

cancer has been reduced by at least 20 per cent in at least 20 percent of countries over the period 1990-2005. We must see this trend as an incentive to continue to work for further reduction.² Initiatives such as this are part of continued efforts towards improving the effectiveness and might I add non-invasiveness and user-friendliness, of screening services throughout the region.

The University of the West Indies is therefore pleased to be at the forefront of health developments in the region, a reflection of this institution's commitment not only to turn out certified graduates but to contribute in many and diverse ways towards improving the quality of life in the region.

While this workshop will focus on the technical aspects of colposcopy, the Caribbean Cancer Screening Programme has identified some of the major challenges confronting cancer screening programmes in the past. These include - inadequate national appreciation of the importance of organized cervical cancer screening programmes; lack of policies regarding cervical cancer control; lack of systems to encourage women to participate and; lack of support and adequate resources for programme managers".³ The strong support of the Ministry of Health here this morning however suggests that some of these challenges are being addressed or may be addressed in the future.

The Caribbean is in need of many more initiatives towards reducing the incidence of cancer in general and cervical cancer deaths in particular. To this end I express gratitude to the Government of Spain, the Government of Trinidad

² Ibid p.2

³ Ibid p.3

and Tobago as well as the CARICOM Secretariat for their collaboration and contribution to this initiative.

Special thanks to the Staff of the Faculty of Medical Sciences who prepared for this workshop and who will participate in it; and to the Ministry of Health, in particular the North Central Regional Health Authority (NCRHA) and the South West Regional Health Authority (SWRHA) for allowing use of their facilities at Mt. Hope and San Fernando for this exercise.

I end now by wishing you a successful week. I speak not only as a member of the UWI Administration but on behalf of thousands of Caribbean women and their families who have a vested interest in your success. I look forward to the expansion of this and other research and technological developments in the future in the area of Colposcopy and other areas of cancer diagnosis, prevention and treatment.

With your permission I will take an early exit as I have a 10.00 a.m. engagement which I need to get to.

Thank you.

Rhoda Reddock