

CVRS | Trinidad Eye Hospital

InSight

Issue 4

Kamaludin's Story

Diabetic amputee gets a new lease on life.

I Spy With My Little Eye

Underlining the importance of vision screening in schools.

Improving Antigua's Cataract Surgery Rate

Private-Public Partnerships making a difference in Antigua

Editors' Message

COVER IMAGE:

Patient Kamaludin Mohammed

Photo Credit: Jason Marcano

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CVRS|TRINIDAD EYE HOSPITAL.

Caribbean Vitreous & Retina Surgery Ltd (CVRS) offers a wide range of high quality ophthalmology and optical services. Trinidad Eye Hospital (TEH) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to make the world a better place by restoring sight for those who have lost their vision their dignity and their hope. All TEH services are free and made possible by its main sponsor CVRS.

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Welcome to Issue 4 of our Insight Magazine. This year, we hope you enjoy the many exciting stories, recapping our 2022 adventures in eyecare here at CVRS|TEH.

One of the most awesome moments we share with you in this issue, is the opening of our new clinic at Pasea in Tunapuna. It was such a great move, to make sure our patients enjoy a new and improved eyecare facility.

Some of our other accomplishments in 2022 included hosting our first ever Cataract Surgery Webinar together with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), travelling to St. Lucia to do cataract surgeries and sending our Senior Resident doctors abroad to continue their education in ophthalmology at the Moran Eye Centre at the University of Utah in the USA.

CVRS|TEH has continued to nurture its commitment to developing a more intuitive and responsive eyecare service experience for patients both locally and regionally and we are so grateful that you our readers, follow our journey with so much loyalty, anticipation and support. Special shout out to our social media community with 7000 of the very best followers you can ask for.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed preparing it for you.

Anura & Franka

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Chairman's Message

Celebrating Growth & Development

When I was growing up, I came to the early conclusion that working hard was going to be the only way to achieve anything meaningful in life. As the curtain closed on 2022, I have to say the CVRS|TEH Team worked very hard and honestly, this has led us all towards a year that was packed with some special and meaningful moments with both our patients and with our amazing team.



In 2022, more than 15,000 patients walked through our clinic doors. The art of restoring and/or protecting eyesight at CVRS|TEH, is something that we hold very dear to us. Our doctors have grown, delivering the highest quality of patient care with the two C's - Confidence and Compassion.

All year round our medical teams attended training and development sessions amounting to more than 80 sessions for the doctors and many hours of training for our technicians who engaged in continuous assessment sessions, all year round.

As I reflect at a time like this, gratitude is the sentiment I would like to express the most. To the team, for always putting the quality of patient care at the top of the list on every single day of the year. To the sponsors, who believe in the work that we do and continue to give generously to our charity surgery programs, which I am so happy to say, has resulted in a total of 65 eye surgeries being done for free this year.

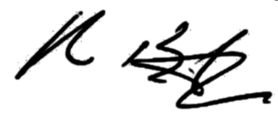
We also strengthened our partnership with the Diabetes Association of Trinidad and Tobago (DATT) who helped to advocate for the importance of eye screening, with more than 775 of their members participating in eye screening for free in 2022.

Chairman's Message

Cataract Surgery is still one of the most powerful procedures that can change someone's life in an instant. I feel encouraged as fellow leaders are starting to prioritize eye health on a greater scale, both here at home and across the region. This year, a total of 276 patients from Antigua and St Lucia had cataract surgery in their home country from CVRS. In January 2023, patients in Dominica are also set to benefit from long-awaited eye surgery. We see that blindness prevention is moving up in the pecking order for public health management and this is hopeful.

Thank you to our patients, partners, team members and friends for believing in the work that we do and going on this journey with us. We look forward to better serving you in 2023. The future looks bright!

Sincerely,



*Dr. Ronnie Bhola
CEO and Chief Surgeon (CVRS)
Chairman of The Board (TEH)*



Greetings from the General Manger

Ms. Celia Jaikissoon

'The best-laid plans o' mice an' men....'? If you do not know that poem or just that famous line, it translates into 'The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry'. So COVID-19 took its toll on the world, and lots of projects went awry, and so did some of ours. However, CVRS and TEH are still here, and yes, some plans did change, but we have experienced much growth that was even greater than expected, within the last two years.

We were able to make that planned move in 2020 of our San Fernando operations from the Acropolis Medical Centre to the Maska Compound in La Romain. The space was much larger than originally expected, with quite a state-of-the-art feel. You should come over and visit us here some time. In addition, we were also successful in making a much-needed move from our very small St. Augustine space at the TIMT Building at Corner Private Road and Warren Street, St. Augustine to the newly renovated 'Building B', at the Pasea Centre in Tunapuna, corner Churchill Roosevelt Highway and Pasea Road. This was accomplished in April of 2022. Now, both staff and patients have commented on the comfort, spaciousness and 'difference' of this new facility, so much so, that you should really come and see it for yourself!

Since my last message, some things that have changed and are worthy of mention: we may only have 2 clinic facilities now, at Maska and at Pasea, however, they have been staffed with several doctors to offer patients the opportunity to get early appointments. No more needless waiting. Both of our clinic teams have grown exponentially to accommodate all these extra clinics. What has not changed? Our staff is still a team! 'A team of exceptionally hardworking and dedicated individuals, who give their time tirelessly to ensure patient care remains our number one priority'.

So what plans are still being laid? Still on the books - plans 'to construct a state-of-the-art Day Surgery Centre in' ... wait for it... 'Aranguéz'!!! We want to be able to offer our patients greater accessibility to receive their eye surgeries and this location will do just that. We know that 'service to others' is one mission that will remain a priority for us. So let us look forward to the continuation of this wonderful journey together.

We know that 'service to others' is one mission that will remain a priority for us.

Bon Voyage Dr. Kumar!

On Friday 9th September 2022 we bid farewell and bon voyage to Dr. Kumar. Dr. Kumar's stay with CVRS | TEH has been a remarkable one. During his time with us, he wore many hats and served as Consultant Ophthalmologist, Surgeon, Director of Education and Clinical Lead of Diabetic Eye Screening Program (DESP).

Dr. Kumar contributed immensely to our organization and our own organization's growth and development and by extension to our country, and we are certain that he will do the same wherever he goes. We wish him all the best on his new adventure – wherever in the world that takes him!





Kamaludin Hosein

Life Changing Surgery

Kamaludin's Story

Mr. Jason Marcano

Hello, I'm Jason and I'm a content creator at CVRS|TEH. As someone generally standing behind a camera, there is no shortage of life stories to be heard. However, this one is different. This is the story of Kamaludin.

It was my first interaction with someone who has been severely impacted by vision loss. Kamaludin's plight was astonishing and to me, revealed the true depth of how your whole life could be derailed by vision loss.

Kamaludin, is a soft-spoken, elderly amputee with a frail disposition. Despite the challenges presented by diabetes, including losing an arm and a leg, Kamaludin always found a way. He has a prosthetic leg that he uses to get around and to commute to his fruit stall on Library Corner in San Fernando where he earned his living. This all came to an end when his vision deteriorated.

With the inability to see, he was unable to put on the prosthetic leg for himself. Now confined to a wheelchair he couldn't earn a living like he used to, and even simple daily tasks became a challenge. Kamaludin, without his earnings from his fruit stall, survives solely on a disability grant from the government. "I can't even see the plate of food in front my face, I would have to feel for it," said Kamaludin as he described the challenges he faced every day. Losing his sight had cost him his livelihood, mobility and his independence.

Kamaludin realized that in order to regain his independence, he had to get back his vision. Fortunately, in July 2022, He was selected to be a recipient of Trinidad Eye Hospital's Gift of Sight Charity surgery event. I interviewed Kamaludin during a doctor's visit before his surgery. He expressed how happy he was to be selected, but the true joy was revealed when we spoke after his surgery.



"I woke up in the morning, removed the patch, and the colours and everything just start to come back, boy you does just feel kinda way yes," a now smiling Kamaludin exclaimed. Kamaludin is still on his way to getting back to his best, however with raised spirits, returning vision in one eye, he is hopeful that he can soon go back to being independent and earn a living for himself again.

"I woke up in the morning, removed the patch, and the colours and everything just start to come back, boy you does just feel kinda way yes,"

Dr. Bhola's Appointment as OSWI's Vice President

On July 13th 2022, the Ophthalmological Society of the West Indies (OSWI) voted in a new executive. Serving on that executive committee is our very own Dr Ronnie Bhola in the capacity of Vice President.

Congratulations to the new incoming executive lead by Dr. Rajrishi Sharma. We at CVRS|TEH look forward to seeing the wonderful things OSWI and this new team will implement for the study and practice of ophthalmology in the West Indies



Left to Right: Dr. Ronnie Bhola - Vice President, Dr Rajrishi Sharma - President, Dr. Ciara Ramnarine - Treasurer, Dr. Nilesh Persad- Secretary



Expansive Optical Shop

Hello Pasea!

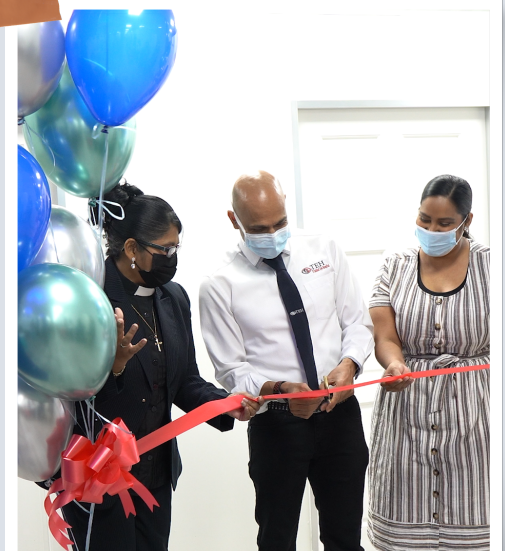
Bringing a new and improved eyecare experience to our patients.



Open & Spacious Waiting Rooms



Private Examination Pods



I Spy With My Little Eye

Dr. Debra Bartholomew

I began wearing glasses at the age of about 8 or 9 but it was not until after several months of squinting, headaches and cries that I was not seeing the blackboard which went largely unheard.

As a parent, I was therefore attuned to any visual issues my son and by extension, their peers may have had at their school, Queen's Royal College. I became fully invested in their holistic education and support.

As a medic, I became a resource for health and wellness for the College as a whole. I found myself wanting to do more, and approached the CVRS|TEH, Dr. Ronnie Bhola, Dr. Vineeth Kumar and lead optometrist Ibraheem Mohammed about providing ophthalmological support for the students, in the form of vision screening in the first instance.

Why vision screening? Vision screening in the community and in schools often helps to identify children whose poor vision can affect their development, learning, and even classroom behaviors. Poor vision means that in affected children and young people clear images cannot be sent to their brain, and such vision problems can have an impact on their development including their mental health. Interactionists theorized that the label a child receives affects their growth and development. A negative label, such as “slow” can be given due to lack of or decreased classroom participation or abnormal behavior due to decreased vision, and is difficult to shed and can remain for life.



Vision screening is therefore important in identifying issues with vision in children and teens. Since the pandemic, however, with screen time in this population at an all-time high due to lockdowns and remote learning, it was and is imperative that vision screening gets done across the board. The only question was how?

Vision screening can be a tedious and time-consuming process. Traditionally, it could take days or even weeks to screen a large school such as Queen's Royal College. This was where fate stepped in in the form of Dr. Vineeth Kumar who provided us with the means to undertake this project. The main objective was to provide an affordable, sustainable and reproducible means of vision screening in Secondary schools utilizing this software, PEEK Vision software.

After initial virtual meetings, the much-awaited site visit was conducted in May 2022, to arrange and finalize logistics. Correspondence was sent out to parents with regard to permission to conduct vision screening and, on 9th June 2022, and then 7th July, 2022, vision screening was conducted at Queen's Royal College! The College played its role perfectly, efficiently and methodically, which ensured that the process flowed smoothly, and which saw over 300 students screened in 4 hours! Our team of volunteers which included staff of CVRS|TEH, optometry students of UWI School of Optometry, Dr. Kumar, my own son and myself, embarked on this exciting and ground breaking journey.

The entire process yielded 11% of students who screened positive - meaning they needed further examination and most likely a pair of glasses. Of equal importance, though, is the follow up process of feedback to parents and scheduling of refractions by parents for their child. One of the limitations of closing this feedback loop, therefore, is the capability of parents to arrange the testing and if required, glasses. The main limitation to this process is the financial element overall.

The ultimate goal, however, is to empower schools to continue vision screening annually using the process and technology independently of the institutions involved. With education and empowerment, the importance of vision screening will be highlighted and avoidable blindness due to refractive error in this population, by extension, will be reduced.

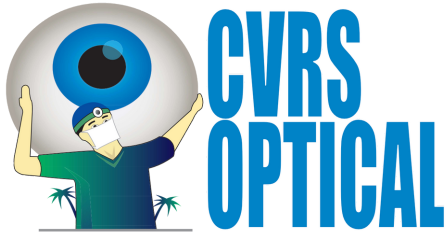
For me, though, my take home lesson was seeing one of my favorite sayings come to life in front of me and in one scene that could've been extracted from any feel-good movie. QRC often finds itself in the unenviable position of being regarded as a prestigious school, when it isn't. In addition, many of the young men are from single parent homes, difficult backgrounds and challenging circumstances



To see the joy on their faces as they receive this experience, seen as a 'gift' to many of them, is a reminder to take nothing for granted. But the most touching scene of our 'movie' begins with the crestfallen face of the first student to screen positive. I watched, as Dr. Kumar leaves what he is doing, walks over to the student, puts his arm around him, comforts and uplifts him. That scene, a reminder to be human always, will stay with me forever.

That moment, a reminder to do good always. To turn adversity into triumph. I was that student. I am now Parent. Medic. Educator. I can make a difference.

"To the world, I may be one person, but to one person, I may be the world."



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- Eyeglasses
- Sunglasses



Vision Screening Outreach Events: A Restart

Ms. Josanne Sylvester

Following the aftermath of COVID-19 regulations of no gatherings and strict social distancing guidelines, we at CVRS|TEH were pleased to usher in the restart of our vision screening and outreach events in 2022. At these events, we do not only raise awareness on the

importance of eye health but also perform vision screening. Many persons who pass through our screenings are often quite surprised that their vision is worse than they thought and that their vision can be improved. Our screening serves as a good indication of whether further examination is needed.



Vision Screening Team

In September, we also did vision screening at the Municipal Police Service Health Fair and St Johns Village Community Centre Village Health Fair. To celebrate World Sight Day on the 14th of October, our team also visited C3 Centre to spread awareness on eye health and the importance of loving your eyes.

As we step back into our vision screening outreach boots, we hope that we can do even more in 2023 as we know that every step towards helping others is a step in the right direction.



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Avoidable Blindness Prevention

The Perfect Present

Ms. Prianka Persad

Our mission is to transform lives through the “Gift of Sight”!

Many of us take our eyesight for granted but the reality of living with poor vision or in total darkness can have a devastating impact on the quality of life for many individuals, their families and by extension, society.

“Charity and love are the same- with charity you give love”

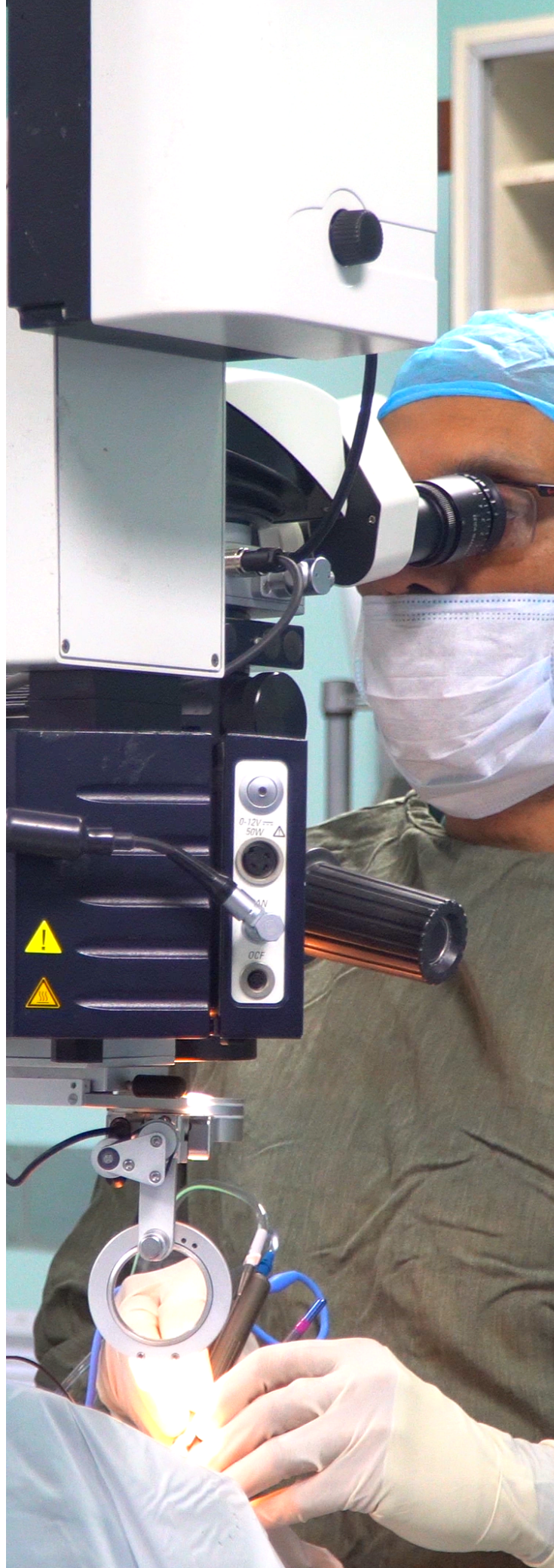
Since its inception in 2014, we have been conducting charity eye surgeries for those patients that cannot afford it through our annual Gift of Sight initiative. We found results of this endeavor to be both rewarding and humbling. For this reason, we have grown the program to make it a bi-annual one and also expanded to offer vitrectomy eye surgeries to those with vision loss from advanced diabetic eye disease.



Our gift of sight initiative now encompasses three charity eye surgery programs, all providing the meaningful gift of restoring sight. Our charitable ventures will continue its legacy by allowing us to break the cycle of hardship that blindness and visual impairment causes, working in alignment with our vision of creating “A World Where Everyone Sees”.

It is exciting to be able to contribute and make a difference in the lives of our patients. We create a wave of kindness that touches not only the patient, but also their families and communities. The gratitude on the patients’ faces the next day is reward enough for our team’s efforts; this gratitude is where the joy resides!

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others”





Travelling Surgery Team

CVRS|TEH

Family Moments



Pasea Team



RCOphth Exams



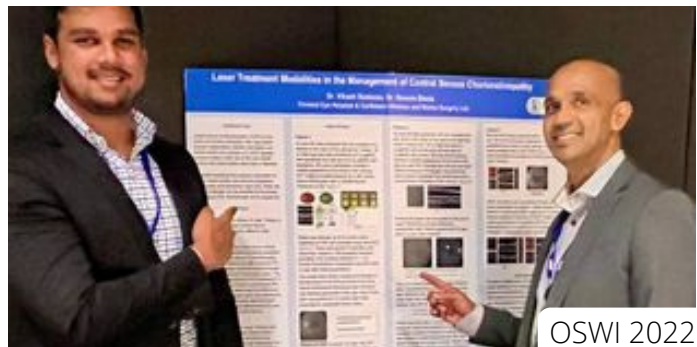
Family Day 2022



San Fernando Team



Vision Screening



OSWI 2022



Doctors' Lounge



Pasea Opening



Christmas Party



Representing at DATT's 5K



Travelling Surgery Team



Training



Family Day 2022



Christmas Party



Gift of Sight Charity Surgery Event



Dr. Kumar's Farewell Ceremony



Call Centre

Avoidable Blindness Prevention

Making A Difference In Antigua

Improving The Cataract Surgical Rate

Ms. Franka Mohammed

Cataract Surgical Rate (CSR) is the number of Cataract Surgeries done per year, per million in a population. It is a proxy indicator of access to eyecare and is a quantifiable measure of the delivery of cataract surgical services in a country.

In the past, like many other countries in the Caribbean, Antigua had low CSR rates in relation to developed-country status which averages between 4000-10,000 per year. In 2013 the CSR was as low as 370.

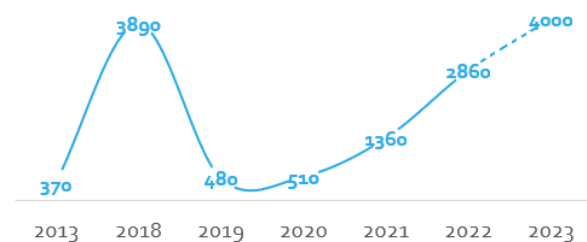
Latin America & Caribbean				
Country	CSR	Year		
Jamaica	264	2013	Nicaragua	1,749 2013
Antigua & Barbuda	370	2013	Colombia	2,005 2013
Haiti	542	2013	El Salvador	2,015 2013
Bolivia	586	2013	Venezuela	2,027 2013
Belize	639	2013	St Vincent & Gren.	2,131 2013
Honduras	723	2013	Uruguay	2,161 2013
Guatemala	781	2013	Dominican Rep.	2,167 2013
Ecuador	972	2013	Guyana	2,413 2013
Peru	1,143	2013	Chile	2,434 2013
Grenada	1,214	2012	Saint Lucia	2,455 2013
Bahamas	1,332	2013	Costa Rica	2,950 2013
			Cuba	3,115 2013

Cataract Surgery Projects by Chinese Ophthalmologists in 2018 saw the CSR shoot up to 3,890, only to plummet to numbers well below 500 in the years that followed.

In October 2018, CVRS|TEH signed an MOU and engaged in a contractual agreement to supply cataract surgeries to the Ministry of Health in Antigua.

What happened next was transformational for Antigua's CSR. Since the MOU, and under the leadership of Minister of Health Mr. Molwyn Joseph, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Rhonda Sealy-Thomas and Medical Director Dr. Albert Duncan, the CSR in Antigua increased significantly moving from 480 in 2019 to 2,860 in 2022. Furthermore, the public/private partnership between the Antiguan government and CVRS|TEH provided a golden opportunity to design and implement a plan to drive the CSR up to 4000 by 2023.

PROJECTIONS OF CATARACT SURGICAL RATE FOR ANTIGUA & BARBUDA



This indicates that high volume cataract surgery interventions on a consistent basis in countries without a high surgeon to population ratio can be effective, when it comes to reducing blindness from cataracts on a national scale.

The increase in the CSR in Antigua has inspired the CVRS|TEH team to increase advocacy efforts for Public/Private models of eyecare delivery at home in Trinidad and Tobago so that patients at home can also benefit from this type of approach.

Avoidable Blindness Prevention

Hello St. Lucia! *Cataract Surgery in St. Lucia*

Ms. Franka Mohammed

In November 2022, Dr. Dhamendra Shah, ophthalmologist based in St. Lucia, invited CVRS|TEH to perform cataract surgeries for some of his patients in St. Lucia. This was the first time our Chief Surgeon, Dr. Ronnie Bhola, ventured to St. Lucia to perform cataract surgery, however, it was an exciting opportunity to help people in need of surgery, to see again.

While in St. Lucia, Dr. Bhola consulted on Retina cases and was also asked to do retina surgeries for patients there in the future.

Interestingly enough, the team found that the most valuable part of the visit, emerged from the intangible bonds formed with the doctors and eyecare professionals who want to make a difference in the lives of others.

More and more, eye care providers are embracing the opportunity to collaborate and form strategic partnerships to provide cataract surgery services in an unconventional way. In this post-pandemic era, with high wait times for cataract surgery, the benefits of collaboration have increased and CVRS|TEH understands the importance of participating in the solution.



Dr. Dhamendra Shah & Patient

Dr. Shah said that this first visit brought him a sense of hope, since St. Lucia and smaller islands like St. Lucia often feel isolated. Performing cataract surgery without retina surgery support can be risky in the event that complications should arise. Having a retina surgeon like Dr. Bhola perform cataract surgery in his country therefore reduced this risk and was definitely a welcome experience for him and his team, but also for the patients.

While patients got their eyesight restored, the pre-op, post-op, surgical training and development experiences that resulted were inspiring. Over time, CVRS|TEH has become more engaged in the dynamic process of building eyecare champions in countries across the Caribbean Region, so in 2022, we were very pleased to add St. Lucia to this Network.

Education to Protect Tomorrow: Access to Diabetes Care

Mr. Andrew S. Dhanoo, President DATT

We have collectively experienced two of the most unstable years in our lifetimes. We have made it through, with shared effort, to preserve life. However, this pandemic caused by a novel virus has highlighted the other pandemic of Diabetes which has been steadily creeping up on us in T&T for the last few decades.

Our official Diabetes prevalence rate now hovers around 15%; however, with global findings revealing that half of all People Living with Diabetes (PLWD) are undiagnosed, we may have closer to 30% of our population living with Diabetes.

Now more than ever, we must make meaningful steps towards preventing those at risk from developing the disease while also assisting those living with Diabetes to manage it. At the DATT over the next year, we will focus on building the capacity to deliver care through screening, education, support and volunteerism. We will also work with partners to execute preventative interventions through outreaches across communities, workplaces, and schools.

At the DATT, we understand that early screening for Diabetes and regular monitoring for diabetic complications is critical to maintaining a long healthy life.

We have introduced subsidised HbA1c and Lipid Screening at our Chaguanas and Arima Branches, which has been exceptionally well received by our membership and the general public, with over 3000 tests done in the last year alone. We will now improve our reach by establishing new screening locations and offering caravan services to companies and public establishments. We will also expand our Diabetic Eye Screening Programme with our partners at the Trinidad Eye Hospital, visiting more communities across our islands.

Except taken from World Sight Day Address



CVRS | TEH signed a two-year institutional partnership with the Diabetes Association of Trinidad & Tobago (DATT). Strengthening bonds in diabetic eye screening efforts in 2023 and beyond.

Diabetic Eye Screening Program

Get Screened – It's Important!

2022 brought several changes to our Diabetic Eye Screening Program (DESP) but the program continued to expand, despite the many challenges experienced.

With an increase in screening locations, training of additional screeners and the development of our in-clinic screening, we are expecting a steady increase in the number of persons screened in 2023. There is a large need for Diabetic Eye Screening due to percentage of the population currently afflicted by diabetes.

With our partners, the Diabetes Association of Trinidad and Tobago (DATT), we have travelled throughout the country to conduct free screening for persons with diabetes. 64.2% of persons screened in 2022 came through our partnership with DATT and we are continuously grateful for their support. Overall, our screening results underscore the increased need to screen more persons. 56% of persons screened in 2022 were referred for a significant eye condition. This is a large increase when compared to the 31% in 2021.



In 2022, 32% of persons screened had some form of diabetic retinopathy with a significant 17.4% having sight threatening retinopathy. Screening not only detects diabetic eye disease, but also other eye conditions with 38.2% referred for cataracts, glaucoma and other eye conditions.

We are so encouraged however, that there was a significant increase in attendance from 60% to 75% for follow up visits with the doctor. Timely treatment can make a big difference when it comes to diabetic eye diseases.

We are on a mission to screen all persons with diabetes in Trinidad and Tobago. Screening is free, the first visit with the doctor if referred is free, additional scans for that first visit is also free, we hope that encourages more persons with diabetes to get screened- it's important!




FREE DESP SCREENING



**DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF
WHAT'S IMPORTANT**

**DIABETIC EYE SCREENING
PROGRAM (DESP)**

FREE FOR ALL PERSONS WITH DIABETES

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CVRS|TEH Call Centre

Ms. Karina Toofan

Greetings readers! I'd like to introduce you to our newly opened CVRS|TEH Call Centre. Firstly, I'd like to mention that our goal is to serve our callers as best as possible, welcoming them to our services and making them feel comfortable before they physically visit our offices.

CVRS|TEH Call Centre was launched on July 4th, 2021 with three staff members. It was very challenging at first, as we realized that our target of 150 calls per day was a mere dream since we were only able to take live an average of 90 calls daily. We expanded our Call Centre to include two additional staff members, and we managed to capture a daily average of 150 live calls.

Approximately one year from our inception, we were able to implement a new phone system which made a huge difference to our operations as a Call Centre and we were able to service over 200 live callers a day! We were very satisfied with this increase, which led us to create new targets for our diligent and hardworking Call Centre Representatives, now a team of six.

***“When life gets blurry,
see your Eye Doctor”.***

Some of our more frequently asked questions are “How do I know I have cataract?”, “What do I do if my eyes are red, swollen and painful?”, “I am interested in the DESP program. May I have info please?”, “What is the subsidized pricing program and can anyone join this program?”, “I am very interested in getting on the charity list for surgery, how does this work?”.

The best advice we give to callers is “Book an appointment with us, so that our doctors can examine you and answer all your questions”. This allows the patient to be seen by a professional and get the treatment and care that they need. “When life gets blurry, see your Eye Doctor”.

We at the CVRS|TEH Call Centre look forward to hearing from you soon. Call us at 235-4834



Call Centre Team

Training & Development

Continuous Learning

Ms. Anura Bodoie-Bunsee

Learning and continuous development have become pillars in the structure of CVRS|TEH. We recognize the importance of continuous education in the organization's ability to grow, keep abreast with new technologies, emerging methods and ultimately to provide the highest level of care we can to our patients.

Training and development on all levels were the focus in 2022.

Our Resident Training program has blossomed into a well-rounded training experience for our residents of ophthalmology. The program allows residents to be exposed to all different subspecialties of ophthalmology through local and international rotations at various eye clinics.



Dr. Avidesh Panday, Dr. Ronnie Bhola and Dr. Vineeth Kumar



Our weekly teaching sessions have also grown significantly. In addition to several foreign and local guest lecturers, we now have residents of ophthalmology not only from Trinidad and Tobago but also from countries throughout the region logging on.

With over 80 virtual sessions completed in 2022, we look forward to even more as these sessions provide a forum for discussion and knowledge sharing across countries in 2023.

Several in-house training programs have also been created including our Clinic Services training and Surgical Services training programs. Our intensive and continuous in-house training programs ensure that all our staff develop professionally but also ensure that our level of service to our patients is always of a high standard and quality.

Research Fellow

Dr. Alexander Fraser

The role of research fellow at CVRS|TEH promises growth for anyone interested in developing their skills as a clinician-researcher. It encourages hands-on interaction at all levels of patient care and challenges those who dare to engage in research activities as part of a team.

For me, the journey so far has been an environment highly conducive to learning, developing critical thinking and leadership skills, as well as gaining meaningful clinical, teaching and research experience. This has only been made possible through heartfelt mentorship by experienced consultants and resident ophthalmologists as well as a host of other supportive and enthusiastic personnel including optometrists, ophthalmic technicians, administrative and executive staff, and even an in-house statistician.

CVRS|TEH has created this role with the intent of engendering a culture of research within the organization as well as ophthalmologists throughout the nation and region.



They see the value of critically and systematically appraising and reporting all aspects of the practice of ophthalmology. Not only for the benefit to the institution, its staff, and its patients alike, but also in the bigger picture, for the ripple effect that we can have by pushing the envelope and being advocates with the goal of reducing the burden and suffering for those with preventable blinding eye conditions. This is especially useful in a society where it is possible that many in need of treatment, continue to fall through the cracks.

Through continued collaboration, both within and outside of the institution, there is limitless potential for this eyecare organization and all its endeavours. I am immensely grateful to have been blessed with the opportunity to be part of the CVRS|TEH team.

Knowledge Sharing

DATT Internship & UWI Optometry Students

CVRS|TEH continues to focus on the importance of knowledge sharing and hosted 3rd year students from the University of the West Indies Optometry Program, as well as Secondary School Interns from the Diabetes Association of Trinidad and Tobago (DATT).

22 UWI Optometry students completed their year 3 clinical externship at CVRS|TEH clinics over a period of 12 weeks. The Externship's aim is to provide optometry students with an opportunity to see/learn from an ophthalmologist what they do, how they do it and why they do it. They were able to experience and learn step-by-step procedures involved in the detection and diagnosis of different ocular diseases, for example, retinal detachment, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, cataract and many other common eye conditions. Students were also allowed to participate in patient care, learning when it can be managed safely and efficiently.



CVRS|TEH also hosted 25 form 6 students from across the country as part of the DATT's summer internship program in July/August 2022. The aim was to immerse students, who intend to pursue medical sciences, in health promotion, advocacy and research activities. Students were exposed to all aspects of the running of the CVRS|TEH clinic including reception, scans, refraction, screening and medical consultations.

It was indeed a privilege and a pleasure to inspire the next generation of potential eye care professionals, as they experienced the joy of sight restoration right here with us at CVRS|TEH.



Our First Cataract Panel Webinar

Ms. Franka Mohammed

On Thursday 21st July 2022 CVRS|TEH facilitated a webinar in collaboration with PAHO, entitled “Addressing Cataract Surgery in the Wake of Covid-19. Challenges and the Way Forward”.

Professor Bernard Chang, President of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists in the UK, delivered the feature presentation which focused on the UK Experience with increasingly long cataract surgery waiting lists in the UK's National Health Service (NHS).

Professor Chang discussed the strategies that the NHS team used to manage the cataract backlog post-COVID-19. The primary objective for the webinar was to hear about the UK experience of cataract surgery management post-pandemic and to discuss parallels related to similar issues in Trinidad & Tobago and the Caribbean Region.

The session was moderated by Dr. Dorian Dwarika, consultant ophthalmologist at CVRS. Fifty-nine, attendees logged on to join the discussion, including the President of the Ophthalmological Society of Trinidad & Tobago, Dr. Vishwamitra Ramdath and past President of the Ophthalmological Society of the West Indies, Dr. Terrance Allen.

Dr. Erica Wheeler PAHO/WHO (World Health Organization) Representative, Trinidad & Tobago, Aruba, Curacao, Sint Martin, Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba also gave a special address, publicly

stating her support for raising the priority on eye health management within the Caribbean Region. She asked for more open discussion and idea generation and encouraged increased collaboration and partnerships, to reduce blindness from cataracts.

Professor Chang said a survey recently done in the UK showed that it may take about 1–3 years to clear out patient backlog resulting from the pandemic. He also shared some ideas about how to get cataract surgeries done faster in countries with similar challenges, for example:

- Outsourcing some of the surgeries to the private sector
- Increasing the investment in workforce
- Retention, including utilizing recently retired staff
- Consider increasing the role of non-medical technicians
- Modernizing dated eye units
- Adequate Funding Allocation

Professor Chang also stated that although the NHS increased its reliance on the private sector for cataract surgery support from 11% to 50%, every country's solution will be different.

The webinar opened the discussion for ophthalmologists to be more vocal about what is needed in their various populations but also gave them the courage to actually do it.

Historic RCOphth Exams in Trinidad & Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago has now officially served as an examination location for the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, namely the 2022 FRCOphth Refraction Certificate and the 2022 Part2 FRCOphth Oral examinations. These examinations were successfully held during the week of 15th – 18th March, 2022 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Port of Spain.

6 candidates took the exams and were extremely thankful for the opportunity of having the examinations facilitated in the Caribbean. Previously, candidates would have had to travel to the United Kingdom or other European locations to take these examinations.

The Head of Examinations at the College, Mr. Dylan Costello, along with a delegation of international examiners successfully hosted the examinations together with local support from the Ophthalmology fraternity.

Five (5) local Consultant Ophthalmologists including the OSTT President, had the opportunity to serve as examiners. Local Consultant Ophthalmologists were: Dr. Vishwamitra Ramdath, Dr. Shivanand Ramdeen, Dr. Josh Ramkissoon, Dr. Ronnie Bhola and Dr. Vineeth Kumar.

This opportunity was a historic event for all aspiring ophthalmologists to take these exams for the first time, not only in the Caribbean Region, but in the Western Hemisphere.

In March 2023, we look forward to having more examination candidates and aspiring ophthalmologists from Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean region as well as more examiners from the Caribbean's Ophthalmology fraternity. This is a wonderful opportunity for the study, development and practice of Ophthalmology in the region.



Left to Right: Dr Shivanand Ramdeen, Dr Vineeth Kumar, Dr Ronnie Bhola, Dr Josh Ramkissoon and Dr Vishwamitra Ramdath



Left to Right: Erika Ruiz, Anna Reed, Dr. Zahrid Mohammed and Dr. Craig Chaya

My Observership Experience At John A. Moran Eye Centre, Utah

Dr. Zahrid Mohammed

My first interaction with the John A. Moran Eye Center, Utah was at an initiative in Trinidad 2018, when their global outreach team visited Trinidad to offer help to our citizens.

It was then that I had learned of their keen interest towards training and

development of ophthalmology and for me as a Resident in Ophthalmology, that stood out. From there on, a relationship was kindled, and I was privileged to be accepted for an observership at one of the top eye care institutions in the world.

I had mixed emotions about travelling to Utah for this 4-week observership. I was a bit apprehensive but even more excited as I navigated the intricate maze of clinics and surgical theatres, surrounded by picturesque mountains frosted in the season's snow. The team at Moran welcomed me with open arms and I quickly felt right at home. I was treated like Moran family and it helped immensely with my integration into their patient care environment and understanding the needs of their patients as well.

I was exposed to two specialty areas – neuro-ophthalmology and oculoplastics. These types of cases are not normally seen at CVRS|TEH so it was a wonderful opportunity to get exposure there. Consultation sessions at Moran were in-depth and very interactive as every detail of the patient was documented as the 'detectives' worked their way towards a diagnosis for their patients.



It was truly an eye-opening experience witnessing them use all the tools in their arsenal, putting the pieces together and helping so many to solve their problems. In more ways than one, it often reminded me of our own practices and interaction with patients back home at CVRS|TEH, having conversations with our patients learning a little about their lives and all the while, completing our checklist and advising patients of the next step towards better vision.



Dr. Jeff Pettey and Dr. Zahrid Mohammed

At the end of my trip, I couldn't help but think of how closely aligned Moran and CVRS|TEH are in terms of our facilities, outreach and goals of providing 'first world' healthcare for all. This experience has not only forged new friendships, but taught me new skills and life lessons as well that can be applied to cases that we see on a daily basis back at home, to enable us to do more for our patients thereby helping their vision to be the best it can be.

A First Class Training Experience

Dr. Zahrid Mohammed

in August 2022, ORBIS, with the support of Alcon and the Ophthalmological Society of the West Indies (OSWI) held a training project in Fort Worth, Texas for nearly 50 eye care professionals from several countries throughout the Caribbean. ORBIS' clinical staff and volunteer faculty and Alcon bioengineers shared their knowledge with the teams, helping them build skills so they can fight avoidable blindness in their own communities.

I was privileged to attend this training initiative which targeted ophthalmology residents and consultants within the Caribbean region and provided hands on training, with emphasis on cataract and glaucoma surgery and principles, two of the leading causes of blindness not only in Trinidad and Tobago but plaguing our region on the whole.

Once in Fort Worth, we were able to hone our surgical skills using cutting-edge

simulation training technology in the ORBIS' Flying Eye Hospital and at the Alcon Experience Center. Simulation training is an innovative training solution that lets eye care professionals grow their confidence in a risk-free environment before moving on to real-life operations. It has been shown to improve outcomes for patients.

I was fascinated by the concepts developed by the ORBIS team whereby outreach is aimed at not only performing surgeries all over the world but using their own plane "Flying Eye Hospital", which boasts of a fully equipped surgical theatre. Apart from that impressive feat, it was even more enlightening to learn that they focus mainly on education and teaching of doctors in their visiting regions to perform surgeries in a safe and controlled environment.

The highlight though, was having first-hand experience with the latest and most advanced surgical instruments and machines and also an assigned tutor who provided one-on-one feedback during the entirety of the process.

This experience was not only reserved for ophthalmology residents and consultants, as they also hosted an Ophthalmic Equipment Maintenance & Repair Workshop for biomedical engineers and technicians who work in the ophthalmology field. My CVRS|TEH colleague, Godfrey Phillip was also privileged to attend this intensive training and benefitted from both hands-on and theory based training.



Research & Publications



Senior Resident Dr. Sareta K. Dubay becomes CVRS|TEH Ophthalmic Specialist Training (OST) Program's first resident to publish her research.

Long-term outcomes of pars plana Ahmed valve implant and vitrectomy in eyes with refractory glaucoma.

By: Dubay SK, Dwarika D, Bhola R, Kumar BV

Background

Pars plana vitrectomy with implantation of an Ahmed glaucoma valve in the vitreous cavity has been reported with a success rate in the management of refractory and neovascular glaucoma. This study aimed to present the outcomes of pars plana Ahmed glaucoma valve (PPAV) surgical implantation in cases with refractory glaucoma.

Conclusions

PPAV surgery is a successful procedure for IOP reduction in patients with refractory glaucoma. Our study demonstrated either reduction or elimination of IOP lowering eye drops postoperatively. Large scale studies with a comparison group, a longer follow-up, and having various subtypes of glaucoma are required as future research to confirm these outcomes.

Corneal integrity in Ahmed valve implantation: pars plana vs ciliary sulcus vs anterior chamber.

By: Dubay SK, Dwarika D, Bhola R

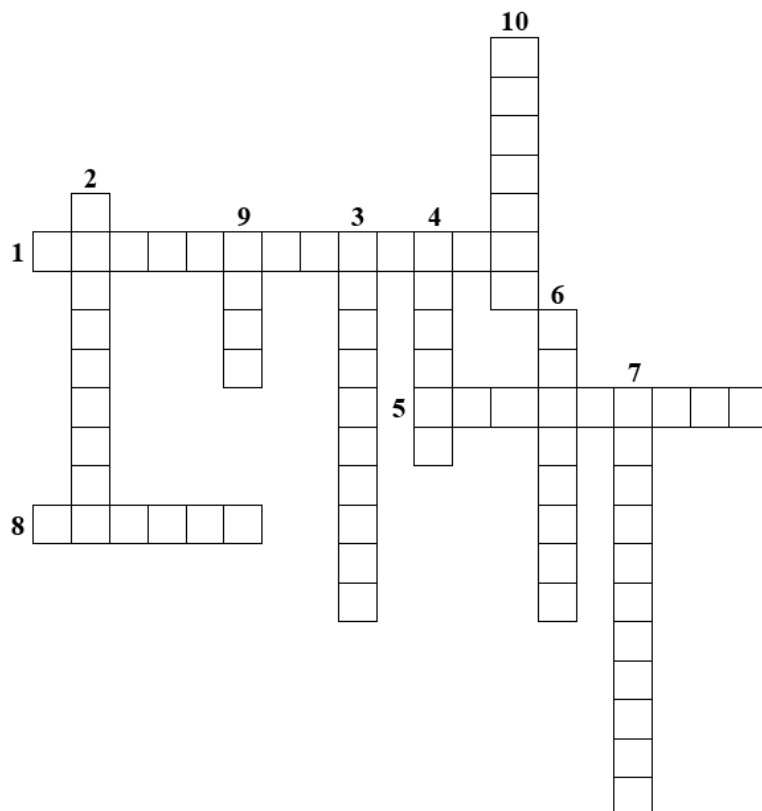
Background

Complex and refractory glaucoma cases, non-responsive to maximal management, require surgical intervention. The Ahmed Valve, a Glaucoma Drainage Device, is widely used in these scenarios. It may be implanted into the anterior chamber, ciliary sulcus and pars plana. However, there is no general consensus in the literature on which location is best when corneal protection is considered. This paper aimed to review all these studies, including ours, to determine which may be best, while still not compromising on valve efficacy in intraocular pressure reduction.

Conclusion

It is recommended that Ahmed valves should be surgically implanted more posteriorly within the eye to avoid corneal complications. Pars plana access appears to be most corneo-protective when compared with ciliary sulcus and anterior chamber implantation.

Games



1. The branch of medicine concerned with the study and treatment of disorders and diseases of the eye. (12)
2. The study of measuring eyesight, prescribing corrective lenses, and detecting eye disease. (9)
3. This transmits impulses to the brain from the retina at the back of the eye. (5,5)
4. The branch of physics that studies the behaviour and properties of light. (6)
5. The clouding of the normally clear lens of the eye (9)
6. A common eye condition where the optic nerve, which connects the eye to the brain, becomes damaged. (8)
7. A common and generally treatable imperfection in the curvature of the lens that causes blurred distance and near vision (11)
8. A common vision condition in which near objects appear clear, but objects farther away look blurry (4)
9. Age Related Macular Degeneration (Abbr.) (4)
10. Conjunctivitis, is also known as _____ (4,3)

Z	Y	X	W	E	G	F	L	O	A	T	E	R	S	R
L	M	N	E	Y	E	S	O	P	M	N	Q	S	T	U
A	A	B	L	I	N	D	Q	R	S	B	A	B	E	Y
S	U	P	C	A	L	A	V	I	T	R	E	O	U	S
D	P	R	E	S	B	Y	O	P	I	A	Q	P	O	L
U	C	F	R	A	C	H	A	L	E	X	P	A	L	A
P	O	P	H	T	H	A	L	M	O	L	O	G	Y	M
P	R	E	Y	R	T	R	J	K	P	C	N	L	V	A
T	N	V	P	B	S	E	E	Q	T	H	A	H	I	C
B	E	K	E	A	X	I	J	M	I	R	I	S	Z	U
W	A	J	R	L	Z	K	E	O	C	U	L	A	R	L
D	M	I	O	B	W	L	R	V	N	K	H	C	Z	A
H	N	O	P	N	R	E	T	I	N	A	S	E	L	Y
M	J	X	I	L	Y	N	K	X	T	U	R	V	T	X
B	O	W	A	K	O	S	M	P	D	J	Y	I	C	B

Blind Optic Macula Vitreous Cornea Iris Ocular Lens Eyes See Floaters Presbyopia Ophthalmology Hyperopia

Answers:
 1. Ophthalmology
 2. Optometry
 3. Optic Nerve
 4. Optics
 5. Cataracts
 6. Glaucoma
 7. Astigmatism
 8. Myopia
 9. ARMD
 10. Pink Eye

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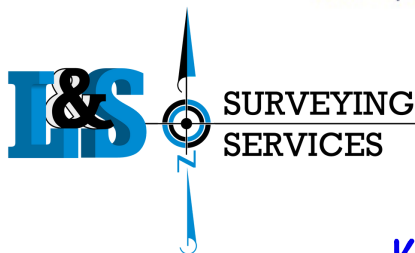


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