

INCREASED CONTRIBUTIONS BOOSTING SOCIAL SECURITY'S COFFERS

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Good Move For World Sight Day

Representatives of the Medical Benefits Scheme, the Mount St John Medical Centre (MSJMC) and the Ministry of Health signed a contract on Wednesday with Trinidad Eye Hospital whereby renowned Caribbean Ophthalmologist Dr Ronnie Bhola (right) will be performing surgeries at MSJMC for one week every month beginning today, World Sight Day. Also pictured is Minister of Health, Molwyn Joseph. (Photo courtesy Ministry of Health) Read story on page 5.

New Ophthalmologist for MSJMC



From left, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health Joan Carrot; Chairman of Mount St John Hospital Board, Sean Cenac; Chief Medical Officer-Dr Rhonda Sealy Thomas; Minister of Health, Molwyn Joseph, Dr Ronnie Bhola; and Chairman of the Medical Benefits Scheme Osbert Frederick. (Photo courtesy Ministry of Health)

By Orville Williams

Ophthalmology services at the Mount St. John Medical Center (MSJMC) will be significantly improved, following the signing of an agreement with the Trinidad Eye Hospital (TEH) and distinguished Trinidadian Ophthalmologist, Dr Ronnie Bhola.

The agreement was formally concretised between the Medical Benefits Scheme, the MSJMC and the Ministry of Health, yesterday, during a ceremony at the Office of the Prime Minister.

Representatives of the various entities – Chairman of the Medical Benefits Scheme, Osbert Frederick; Chairman of the Mount St. John Medical Center, Sean Cenac; Minister of Health, Molwyn Joseph; Permanent Secretary, Joan Carrot and Chief Medical Officer, Dr.

Rhonda Sealey Thomas – were all equally delighted with the agreement and the benefits to come.

Dr. Bhola, who has had a long-standing relationship with the Ministry of Health, is excited to begin the initiative and is encouraged by the positive impact it will have on residents.

“Our partnership will benefit people. People who come to Trinidad have to spend two weeks and that’s very costly for families – accommodation, transportation — things we take for granted,” he said.

“This will change all of that. Instead of a hundred people having to come to Trinidad, one guy will come and that changes everything. We just fly and that means everybody gets to stay with their families [and] get care, something we just take for granted sometimes.”

The Minister of Health, Molwyn Joseph, echoed Dr Bhola’s sentiments, sharing just how cost-effective the agreement will be for locals.

“In Antigua and Barbuda, for the removal of a single cataract, it’s about five to six thousand dollars. Now, Dr Bhola could come to Antigua and remove 20 cataracts on a visit ... that’s the savings. [And] this is being done in way where an Antiguan can go to Mount St. John, get his/her surgery, drive in a car and go back home and rest. That is what this means. This is transformational,” he explained.

Along with performing the surgeries, Dr Bhola and his team will also be conducting educational sessions with Antiguan medical personnel, sharing best practices and helping to improve the skillsets.

He explained the ap-

proach his team will be taking.

“We see education in two ways. One, by us doing these educational sessions, we improve the standard of health care throughout the country – so non-ophthalmologists will know about the eye a little bit more and learn and understand things. But also our team coming, collaborating with your team. Hopefully, your team coming to Trinidad, working a little bit with our team and you get that one-on-one learning going on.

“Immediately, I see benefit – both on the educational side and also delivering a better service to the people,” he said.

The length of the initial agreement will be two years and the first batch of surgeries will begin today, which is coincidentally, World Sight Day.