

Over a Thousand Eye Surgeries Performed Under Jamaica/Cuba Programme

Some 1,250 persons with specific eye conditions, benefitted from 1,410 procedures conducted under the Jamaica/Cuba Eye Care programme during 2012.

This was disclosed by Co-ordinator of the programme, Gregory Thomas, in an interview with JIS News. He further informed that over 16,000 consultations also took place last year. The programme, which seeks to help reduce preventable blindness in adults, evolved from the five-year Jamaica/Cuba Eye Care Project, which previously saw persons being screened for eye conditions in Jamaica and sent to Cuba for treatment. "The first Bilateral Agreement of Co-operation between the Governments of Jamaica and the Republic of Cuba for the establishment of an Ophthalmology Centre of Excellence in Jamaica, where persons would be treated for eye disorders here instead of having to seek treatment abroad, was signed on July 28, 2009. This marked the end of an era spanning five years and the beginning of a new one," he said. Launched in January 2010, the programme offers surgical treatment for persons suffering from three specific conditions: Cataracts, Diabetic Retinopathy (damage to the retina caused by complications of diabetes mellitus) and Pterygium (a non-cancerous fleshy growth, usually on the surface of the eye), free of cost. Mr. Thomas further noted that since the programme's inception, over 46,000 consultations have been done; over 4,200 surgeries have been performed; and over 3,790 patients have received surgical treatment. The Co-ordinator told JIS News that the programme will continue to provide the highest level of care to patients, with a view to keeping the number of complications to a minimum. "Since the start of the programme, there has been only one case of serious complication of the over 4,200 surgeries performed," Mr. Thomas said.