

Teaching Partnership in Guyana Off the Ground

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Anesthesiologists have a long history of volunteering and contributing to overseas humanitarian work, often through surgical service trips that provide direct patient care.

ASA (via the Committee on Global Humanitarian Outreach, or GHO) has for years supported these efforts as well as supported overseas teaching programs in the interest of offering ASA members an opportunity to contribute to developing programs in an educational way. (For an incomplete list of volunteer opportunities, review the links on our webpage www.asahq.org/gho/volunteerism/opportunities). In follow-up to the June announcement regarding a new volunteer teaching opportunity for ASA members in Georgetown, Guyana, we'd like to offer an update on our early progress, with enthusiastic partnerships and a hopeful horizon.

Based on a common vision for safe anesthesia and perioperative care globally, ASA's GHO recently partnered with the Canadian Anesthesiologists' Society International Education Foundation (CASIEF) to provide volunteer support for a young anesthesiology residency program in Guyana. Volunteers recruited and coordinated by the GHO and CASIEF have begun teaching in the capital of Georgetown at the Institute for Health Sciences Education (IHSE) Georgetown Public Hospital (GPHC).



Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation.

The ASA-GHO/CASIEF partnership has established ties with Dr. Alexandra Harvey, a native Guyanese anesthesiologist, who has dedicated the last several years to improving patient care and safety of surgery and anesthesia through the education of bright, young doctors. In 2013, with the help of McMaster University in Canada, she established a skeleton curriculum for a residency program to begin at IHSE hospital in Georgetown, Guyana. Residents earn a diploma after completing two years of the program and a master's degree at the end of four years (the U.S. equivalent of residency



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completion). The first two residents entered the program in 2013, and there now are a total of 10 trainees across all four years. Those first two residents will graduate next summer – the first time that the number of anesthesiologists in Guyana will grow under its own power.

The partnership is modeled after the ASA-CASIEF program that supports the sole residency training program in Rwanda. With the help of more than 100 U.S. and Canadian volunteers, that successful program has graduated 14 Rwandan anesthesiologists since 2006, greatly increasing capacity in Rwanda, which had only one anesthesiologist as recently as the late 1990s. Sights are set equally high for efforts in Guyana, which currently is host to only a handful of certified anesthesiologists – far too few to set the bar high for safe patient care nationwide, much less raise the next generation of local physicians at the same time. This is where you, as regular visiting faculty supplementing classroom and clinical teaching, come in.

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September 2016 marked the beginning of this teaching legacy in Guyana, with the arrival of the first ASA volunteer. Volunteers offer their expertise in the form of classroom and clinical teaching and formal evaluation of resident performance, rather than in direct patient care. The curriculum is a framework and relies on physician volunteers for depth and application. Volunteers teach according to the planned curriculum and also contribute on many subjects of particular interest or subspecialty.

As part of the long-term plan for support of the Guyanese residents, not only will volunteer teachers come to them on site in Guyana, but Guyanese residents also will ultimately have the opportunity to rotate in the U.S. and Canada. With funding from McMaster University and the

International Outreach program of the St. Joseph’s Health System, senior Guyanese residents now rotate through anesthesia electives at McMaster. Similar efforts by programs in the U.S. are being developed to accept rotators from the ASA-GHO teaching programs as well.

Guyana is a safe and friendly country, and English is the official language, providing an optimal setting for volunteers to make a meaningful contribution to mentoring future anesthesiologists. As a benefit to ASA members, the opportunity is funded through ASA’s GHO Committee with a stipend to be applied to travel costs, with lodging and transportation included. Project Dawn, a local NGO, provides comfortable accommodations and transit to and from the hospital facility. Four months of volunteer time are supported by both the ASA and CASIEF, totaling eight months of teaching support through the year. The minimum commitment time is two weeks, with four weeks preferred.

Feedback from previous volunteers to overseas teaching programs has been overwhelmingly positive. Volunteers report that working and teaching within the foreign environment, with local equipment and supplies, leads to ongoing reflection and refinement of their practice at home. They question why exactly we do what we do in resource-rich settings and what parts of our practice really are important. Volunteers also report feeling huge gratitude from the local providers and students they spend time with, and generally feel like they left something really impactful behind, passing on knowledge and skills to empower local providers to continue taking good care of patients after they leave. They also report feeling they are better anesthesiologists after the experience and are more resourceful and flexible.

We are excited to see this program up and running! We are so encouraged by its early successes and glad to be able to offer ASA members another opportunity to volunteer as educators. We encourage you to consider volunteering to teach in Guyana! Any ASA member is eligible to apply. For more information, please contact Dr. Julia Weinkauff at jweinkauff@gmail.com.