

The World Council of Optometry

Meeting of the General Delegates to be held 5 June 2009

Trinidad and Tobago Country Report

Trinidad & Tobago Optometrists Association

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is a twin island state in the Southern Caribbean. Trinidad and Tobago is the southernmost of all the Caribbean islands. Lying to the northeast of the South American nation of Venezuela and south of Grenada. It also shares maritime boundaries with Barbados to the Northeast and Guyana to the southeast. The country consists of two main islands, Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad is the larger and more populous of the main islands, Tobago is much smaller and comprising about 6% of the total area and 4% of the population. A history of slavery and indenture ship has left the country with a mixture of African, Indian, mixed race, European, Middle Eastern and the Chinese. All these groups have an imprint on the national culture.

Trinidad and Tobago is primarily an industrialized country whose economy is based on petroleum and Petrochemicals. Although it is located just off-shore from South America, Trinidad and Tobago is an English speaking country mainly due to its colonial past as a commonwealth country. As of 2005, Trinidad and Tobago has a population of 1.3 million people. Trinidad and Tobago is famous for its pre-Lenten Carnival. It is also the birth place of calypso music, Steel pan and limbo. This year we are the host to the Fifth Summit of the Americas in April 2009 and the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in November 2009.

Optometry

There are approximately 109 optometrists registered to practice in Trinidad and Tobago, 26 dispensing opticians, and 36 ophthalmologists. Optometrist and dispensing opticians share the same regulatory body known as The Trinidad And Tobago Opticians Registration Council with the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) as the Chairman. Optometrists have a separate association known as Trinidad and Tobago Optometrists Association (TTOA). Presently only 57 optometrists are financial members of the TTOA .The relationship between Optometry and Ophthalmology is anything but cordial with organized Ophthalmology opposing any legislation that widens the scope of practice of the optometrist.

Trinidad and Tobago Health policy: Vision 2020 Draft National Strategic

Plan: Excerpts include

Goal 1: Improve general health status of the population.

Objective 1: To promote primary health care and empowerment of people to take ownership of their own health.

Objective 3: To enhance longevity and quality of life.

Action step 1: PAHO/WHO healthy communities' initiatives.

Objective 4: To develop all categories of human resources for health particularly geriatricians, counselors, nurses etc. (optometrists)

Scope of practice

Optometrists in Trinidad and Tobago practice under an archaic law known as The Opticians Acts 1960, which does not allow the optometrist the use of diagnostic and pharmaceutical agents except for Rose Bengal , Fluorescein strips and topical anaesthetics such as amethocaine, benoxinate and proparacaine. The law also prohibits anyone registered to practice Optometry and not being a medical practitioner from using the title "Dr" even if you qualified with O.D or with PhD.

The Ministry of Health has begun the process of updating their Optometry policy.

Education:

There are plans to begin an optometry program in August 2009 at

The University of The West Indies, (UWI) St Augustine campus in

Trinidad. This to be a four year Bsc. Program. The University has advertised for Senior Lecturer with PHD in Optometry to assist in development of the program.

Please visit <http://sta.uwi.edu/jobs/> for more details.

The TTOA is active and its events will climax on World Sight Day October 8th 2009 with a Vision 2020 Right to Sight conference planned. The theme of the conference is "Gender and Eye Health "and will focus on "the Public Health Importance of Optometry in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean". This is to be followed by a Continuing Education Conference on the weekend, the theme of which is "Neurology and the Eye"

Executive committee 2009

At the Annual General meeting convened by the TTOA in January 2009, the following were elected to sit on the Executive Committee of the association for two years.

Nigel St Rose B.Sc. (Hons) M.C. Optom

President

Email: nigelstrose@hotmail.com

Spencer Chote B.Sc.(Hons)MC.Optom

President Elect

Email: s_chote@hotmail.com
Janelle King B.Sc. (Hons) MC. Optom
Immediate Past President
Email: jksk99@gmail.com
Roshan Ali B.Sc. (Hons) MC. Optom
Executive Director
Email: roshan_ali_0104@hotmail.com
Carol Ann Poon Affat B.Sc. (Hons) MC. Optom
Treasurer
Email: capoonaffat@yahoo.com

Committee members:

Dr Jones Efiemokwu, O.D
Email: efiemokwu@yahoo.com
Lauren Robinson B.Sc.(Hons)MC.Optom
Email: laurenpaula@yahoo.com
Joanna Camps B.Sc. (Hons) MC. Optom
Email: jo_camps@yahoo.com

Prepared by
Nigel St Rose
President, TTOA,
Caribbean Optometrist Association (CARIOA)