

HISTORY OF RADIOGRAPHY AND THE SCHOOL OF MEDICAL RADIATION TECHNOLOGY

Radiography began in Jamaica at the Kingston Public Hospital in the mid - 1940's as an apprenticeship program in which participants were trained mainly through clinical placement. The first practitioner qualified from this program in 1947, and the second in 1949. The School of Radiography was subsequently established in 1965 at the University Hospital of the West Indies (UHWI) as a tertiary-level educational institution to facilitate the development of diagnostic radiography in the Caribbean region, and to supply a steady flow of qualified radiographers to meet the needs of the territory's health services. The institution initially offered a two-year program in diagnostic radiography under the leadership of a local Principal Tutor in conjunction with the parent institution – The College of Radiographers, London, England. The radiography program received the support of several Caribbean and African countries from which students were sent for training. These countries included Guyana, Trinidad, Antigua, Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Nigeria and Namibia.

In 1982, The College of Radiographers, London undertook a reform of its Diagnostic Imaging program to include raising the entry requirements and extending the program from 2 years to 3 years duration. Driven by these changes and their impact on the competitiveness and viability of the local program, planning commenced to develop a program that was more compatible with Caribbean needs and that would maintain a steady intake of students. With the assistance of Health Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE) project, an American humanitarian Non-Governmental Organization, volunteers were dispatched to Jamaica to help develop and resource the new curriculum. By 1984, the school launched a revised

diploma program, the Caribbean Diploma in Diagnostic Radiography, of 3-year duration, and which ran alongside the London program which was eventually phased out in 1986. The new local program maintained the original entry matriculation requirements and was fashioned on the 'College of Radiographers' curriculum with courses added to expand the scope of the program. In that same year, the school changed its name to the School of Medical Radiation Technology. The curriculum for the Caribbean Diploma facilitated laboratory simulations and clinical placement of students in private, public, and overseas imaging facilities. The program also offered training for darkroom technicians during the period 1993 – 2001. These technicians provided image-processing and imaging equipment maintenance support services in private and public radiology departments across Jamaica.

In 2003, discussions and formulation of proposal began toward the upgrade of the Caribbean Diploma program to an undergraduate degree program arising from government desire to reform tertiary education and University of the West Indies drive to pursue strategic collaborative partnerships with non-university institutions offering tertiary-level training programs. Several hospital-based and free-standing health-care programs were transferred to major universities. The University Hospital of the West Indies entered negotiations with the University of the West Indies on a collaborative Agreement to offer the Bachelor of Science in Diagnostic Imaging program. The program was launched on September 5, 2006, with its first cohort of students which graduated in 2009. The Strategy Committee of the University of the West Indies made subsequent recommendation for the physical transfer of the program from the UHWI to The Faculty of Medical Sciences effective August 1, 2010. The transfer to the University of the West Indies provided an expanded platform through which to market the program, and demand for places has since grown exponentially.