

## Dentistry in Jamaica, 1905–2009: A History

James Monteith

Dentistry in Jamaica 1905–2009 is a most welcomed publication documenting as it does the development of dentistry in Jamaica from the days of the treadle foot machine that early dentists like Dr GR Machado and others of his day would have used, to present high speed air turbines used universally by dentists today.

With the inclusion of a brief history of dentistry from the earliest days, 5000–3000 BC, as a precursor to the main subject matter, the book has been made that much more interesting and informative, and will thus appeal not only to dentists but to all categories of persons who might be interested in knowing about the history of the profession.

It is clear that a great deal of research was put into unearthing the mass of information covered in its nine chapters, and the resulting treatise is an offering which will be a source of inspiration and which should motivate today's scholars and practitioners to further improve the delivery of dental services offered not only to Jamaicans, but also to peoples of the wider Caribbean.

Information regarding the continuing development and improvement in dental services is comprehensively dealt with; the introduction of salt fluorination, in 1987, which resulted in a significant fall in the incidence of dental caries in the young; the increase in dental personnel of all categories; more specialist facilities, dental health education and the introduction of an annual dental health week, and the invaluable role that voluntary dental services, both local and foreign, have played in augmenting the delivery of dental care to the population.

All these initiatives have lead to a more dentally aware population who are accessing the dental services available, resulting in a generalized improvement in dental health.

The establishment of the Jamaica Dental Association in 1928 and the many aspects of its management and the principles of ethics demanded of the profession are clearly outlined, as are the duties of the Dental Council.

The author gives an account of the efforts made for the establishment of the School of Dentistry at the University of

the West Indies and having so far failed in this endeavour, expresses concern that the University does not appear to have, at this time, a functioning dental clinic which, apart from being a teaching faculty for medical students, would also enhance the services offered at the University. This matter should be put on the University's agenda for future development.

In a society where a high percentage of the population is financially compromised, the introduction of health insurance enables this sector particularly to access dental care. The author expresses the view, however, that consideration should be given to offering a higher maximum allowance for dental benefit.

At the end of the book, there are a number of appendices which are good reference material, and a synopsis of the careers of a number of dentists.

All in all, this book is a very noteworthy effort, and the author, Dr James Montieth, who advocates the establishment of a trust or foundation to promote research into special problems of oral and dental illnesses, must be heartily congratulated for the very great effort which he has expended into producing this book.

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*Editor's note: The West Indian Dental Journal was founded by Dr Christopher Ogunsalu in 1994 and after he left Jamaica, an issue was published through the West Indian Medical Journal. The publication of dental papers continues through the Dental Forum section of the West Indian Medical Journal.*

*The University of the West Indies has a School of Dentistry at the St Augustine Campus and has a dental programme in its second year at the Mona campus.*

# The University Diabetes Outreach Programme

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