

Hand over at University of Guyana – October 10, 2007



Mark Mostovac Head of AID, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), (at right) at a Handover event to represent the work done by CIDA through the Public Health Strengthening in Guyana Project handing donated book to Dr. Marilyn Cox of UG with PS MOH watching.



Mark Mostovac discussing current studies and future plans with students before the official handover in the Student Resource Room



Dr. Wallis Plummer starting the ceremony in the Student Resource Room with some of the books donated displayed on table.

One focal point of the PHSG project has also been building the capacity of local health educational institutions and programs through the development of curricula, training models, modules, innovative teaching material, and treatment guidelines. In this context, the University of Guyana has collaborated with the PHSG project for many years and has benefited particularly in the areas of human resource development and infrastructural strengthening. From the earliest stage of the PHSG project, collaborative projects in research and training were identified as key areas that could be explored to strengthen UG's role in public health in Guyana. In particular, there was always interest in enhancing the University's role in providing both the facilities and the expertise for trainer of training services in laboratory techniques to the public sector.

Specific achievements have been:

1. The development of a novel course for training students in the Faculty of Health Sciences in the area of HIV/AIDS and STI infections. This course was developed by the Faculty of Health Sciences with the assistance of the technical experts of CSIH (Drs. Farley, Bowie, Earl Hershfield, Samuel Pancham) and first presented to the students as an elective in Semester II 2004/2005. In August 2005, CSIH supported the cost of the delivery of this course, through the School of Professional Development, to over 80 students in its first offering. Several of the CSIH technical consultants also participated in the delivery of course content, providing the Guyanese students with the opportunity to be trained by Canadian experts at the fore-front of their fields. The course has subsequently become integrated into the offerings of the Faculty as a compulsory course for all students and a module on Tuberculosis has been added. It also continues to be presented in the "summer" session to interested members of the general public.

2. The refurbishment of a student resource center in 2005 to provide students with a comfortable “in-faculty” library, access to internet-ready computers, and a fully equipped classroom with a multi-media projector. Computers within the resource-center and all offices were also networked and provided with DSL service for six months during 2006. This room is intensively utilized by all students of the Faculty of Health Sciences.
3. The refurbishment and equipping of a laboratory to create an STI/TB training laboratory in 2006. This laboratory is now a part of the network of national laboratories of Region 4 and through the collaboration of the University of Guyana and the Ministry of Health, will be used as a training laboratory to support the National Tuberculosis Programme. Two technicians who are expected to work in the laboratory received their initial training during August 2007.
4. Since 2004, the project has also supported original public health research in the areas of focus of the PHSG project, that was conducted by nursing students of the University of Guyana. All of these projects have been accepted for presentation at the annual regional Caribbean Health Research Council meetings, offering these nurses the opportunity to receive regional exposure and feed-back on their work, thereby enhancing their professional development. Areas that have been studied with CSIH support include:
 - Infant feeding practices among HIV sero-positive mothers,
 - Discriminatory practices by health workers to HIV patients,
 - Tuberculosis and Diabetes
 - An investigation of safe injection practices in the maternal unit of the GPHC.
5. Staff and students of the Faculty of Health Sciences have also benefited from workshops, seminars and training presented by PHSG/CSIH in areas of:
 - gender sensitivity issues and HIV/AIDS,
 - Tuberculosis and STI laboratory techniques,
 - Opportunistic infections of HIV/AIDS patients,
 - Curriculum development,
 - VCT training.

Likewise PHSG/CSIH consultants have consistently supported the University and specifically the Faculty of Health Sciences (and to a lesser extent the School of Humanities and Education) through the provision of books, other laboratory equipment and supplies (such as microscopes and consumables), laboratory reference charts, laboratory and other training manuals, videos, CDs and other learning materials.

These contributions and the end of the project were recognized at an official handing-over ceremony on Friday October 12 at the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Guyana Turkeyen Campus. In attendance were representatives from PHSGP, the Canadian High Commission, the Guyanese Ministry of Health, faculty of UG, students and members of the press. Mark Mostovak, Dr. Marilyn Cox and PS all spoke about the success of the collaboration between the two countries. Dr Cox specifically spoke about the hope for more projects together in the future and about the promise of the international scholarship program. The past and current deans of the Faculty of Health Sciences expressed their thanks for the contributions of the project to the learning of their students.