

Eye care in Jamaica with support from Cuba

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By Roberto Morejón

With Cuba's cooperation, Jamaica will be able to make a leap in ophthalmologic care for the population, a procedure inscribed in the close relations between the two neighboring nations.

A little less than twenty Cuban specialists in ophthalmology will promote a program already underway, consisting initially of examinations at the Public Hospital in Kingston, the capital city, to reduce the backlog of pending cases.

The work is part of the local Jamaica-Cuba Eye Care program, to seek the number of patients in need of eye surgeries, one of the priorities of the local health system.

According to the work carried out with the support of the Cubans and in conjunction with Jamaican personnel, it has already been detected that several thousand people require surgery for cataracts and other conditions.

The number of beneficiaries of the Eye Care program between 2010 and 2019, which was only interrupted during the pandemic, records more than 35 thousand patients examined, 21 thousand of whom underwent surgery and 17 thousand avoided blindness.

The white-coat professionals of the largest of the Antilles play a decisive role in such practices, in the training of Jamaican colleagues and in the maintenance of equipment.

Since the establishment of relations between Jamaica and Cuba in 1972, the two countries have put into effect cooperation plans in several areas, although health has been the prevailing one.

A highlight of this rapprochement was the presence of several hundred Cuban health professionals in the island's four regions and 14 parishes during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The English-speaking Caribbean nation of almost three million inhabitants has also benefited from the specialized training of thousands of students in agriculture, health and education.

In the latter area, the arrival in Kingston last September of a new group of Cuban teachers to serve in the public education system stands out.

Havana, which has also shown its willingness to collaborate in special education, assists Jamaica in the training of human resources, as is characteristic of its links with the rest of the Caribbean.

The authorities and the Jamaican population have highlighted the humanist character of public health in the land of José Martí, a principle that has been clearly demonstrated by the dispatch of doctors and nurses, all of them with praiseworthy service in public hospitals.

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