

PROFILE *of The Week*

By **DR. DHANPAUL NARINE**

Dr. Carl Niamatali Founder, Guyana Cares

Dr. Carl Niamatali comes from a family of doctors. They have dedicated themselves to serving the community and these doctors can be found all over the world making a difference in the lives of others. Carl is no exception. He currently plays a leading role in the Guyana Cancer Society and through his vision an organization 'Guyana Cares' was set up in New York recently.

Carl was born in the New Amsterdam area of Berbice in Guyana. His mom's name is Alice and his dad is Isaac. There are ten brothers and three sisters in the family and five of them are doctors and if one includes members of the extended family there are about twenty family members in medicine.

Carl attended the Roman Catholic Boys School in New Amsterdam after which he went to Berbice High School. Carl liked Math, English, Biology and the sciences. He recalls that Mr. Ching was a dedicated math teacher and at Berbice High School there were Mr. Beharry and Paul Blunt who taught science.

Carl was a bright student and he did well. After graduation he went into his family's sawmilling business and he worked there for about five years. The turning point came when his mother called him and said that he needed to further his studies.

Carl said, 'I packed my bags the next day and left for Ireland. My brother Gordon was already there and I was able to meet with him and get valuable advice.'

Carl wrote the medical exams and passed them; this gave him entry into the Royal College of Surgeons. Carl, however, went to the University of Galway where he was one of three foreign students. He said that he has absolutely no regrets going to Galway as it was a fantastic institution with outstanding scholars and people.

Carl graduated with his medical degree and did his internship in Sligo. It was

1979 and after six weeks into his internship an unforgettable incident occurred. Carl said, 'The surgeon that I usually worked with was on holiday. I was asked to work that weekend and they informed that there was an accident. We learned that there was a bomb blast. It turned out that the victims were Lord Mountbatten and members of his family. I was only an intern but I ended up being one of the doctors that treated the Mountbatten family.'

The bomb blast made international headlines and Carl considered it an honor to be able to offer assistance to the family. Carl trained under Professor Ernest Egan who was a fantastic teacher and mentor. In due time Carl became a Senior Registrar in Galway University Hospital and he worked on a cancer program with Professor Egan in the west of Ireland. At one point Carl was the acting Consultant on the program.

Carl thrived with the responsibility of helping to run the cancer program. But his heart was set on returning to Guyana. He left for Guyana on a full time basis in 1987 because his mom wanted him to serve his country.

The government was grateful and involved Carl in a lot of good work. His experience in Galway would prove to be most useful. In 1984 he had seen a patient with the HIV virus in Galway and when he saw a patient in Guyana with similar symptoms Carl was able to arrive at a correct diagnosis. He ended up giving the first AIDS lecture in Guyana and he carried out the first HIV test as well. Carl was also involved in the first

AIDS education program in Guyana.

Is AIDS a big problem in Guyana? Carl says, 'AIDS is a huge problem in Guyana. The only place that has a higher incidence of AIDS than Guyana is Haiti. We always seem to be measured against Haiti. For example, in maternal mortality only Haiti is higher than us. Haiti seems to be the benchmark.'

Carl opened his practice in Georgetown and he later moved to New Amsterdam to be close to his mother. In

Galway he was offered a job there. He worked from 2006 to 2008 in Galway in radiation oncology under Professor Frank Solomon.

Carl was always a giver and would go the extra mile to give comfort to others. He recalls that in 2005 when a hurricane devastated Grenada he was requested to help by 'Direct Relief.'

The minister of Health asked Carl to set up a cancer program which he was happy to do. This meant that he had to fly from Ireland monthly to

The outreach programs have kept Carl busy. He consults with the Guyana Police Force and the senior officers get free medical check up from Carl and his staff. There are fundamental approaches that Carl has to his practice.

The first is that everyone should take responsibility for his or her own health. The second is that people should make good choices in health. For example, drinking and driving can lead to accidents and deaths as can smoking and unsafe sex. These are preventable if one makes good choices.

Carl says that Guyana doesn't have the resources to prevent and treat all the cancer patients but 80 per cent of all cancers are preventable and the mission should be aimed at prevention.

In July 2016 the Guyana Cancer Prevention Society gave a public lecture on 'Cancer of the Cervix' at the Georgetown Hospital in Guyana. The lecture was delivered by Professor C.N Purandare of India and it was Dr. Carl Niamatali that introduced the Professor.

Carl wants to set up a national screening program to have early detection that can help to 'prevent the preventable.' Carl realizes the importance of the diaspora in medicine in Guyana. He has set up 'Guyana Cares' a non-profit organization that is based in New

York to bring awareness to the health and other challenges facing Guyana. Its website is www.guyana-publicsquare.com.

There is no doubt that Dr. Carl Niamatali is a dedicated servant of the community. He aims to build bridges between Guyana, New York and beyond to spread the message of prevention and the importance of wellness. We wish him all the best in the future.



Dr. Carl Niamatali has founded 'Guyana Cares' to promote wellness in the community.

2000 he started to build his own private hospital; unfortunately a fire destroyed the building. But Carl had a desire to give back to Guyana and he did this by doing free medical outreach that included the Amerindian areas in the hinterland.

Carl was also involved in teaching final year medical students from the United States and England. This was an enjoyable experience and when Carl attended the graduation of some of the students

visit the center in Grenada.

Carl returned to Guyana and in 2013 he was to make another innovative move. He observed that Guyana did not have a crematorium. He decided to set up a modern crematorium at 12 Le Repentir at Princess and Louisa Row in Georgetown. It was completed in 2014 and has facilities for all religions, including Skype to accommodate families from abroad. He credits Pandit Rudra Sharma for his help in the project.