



Support the Mission:
The Jamaica Outreach Project helps Jamaica's poor and underserved by providing access to necessities like health care, as well as food, clothing, housing and education. Visit JamaicaOutreach.org/give and specify that you'd like the donation to go to the cataract mission.
"It's all utilized in improving people's quality of life and the funds would be used for making these trips possible," said Dr. Lynn Byerly.

Seeing is Believing

Dr. Lynn Byerly, Dr. Jeffrey Zimm and staff at Doctors Outpatient Surgery Center give the gift of sight back to Jamaica's vulnerable.

Patients in Kingston, Jamaica are seeing life through a whole new lens thanks to Naples area doctors partnering with Jamaican physicians. Dozens of patients with severe cataract issues were given back their vision when staff from Naples-based Doctors Outpatient Surgery Center, along with eye doctors Dr. Lynn Byerly and Dr. Jeffrey Zimm, traveled there to perform life-changing eye surgeries.

The doctors spent the last weekend of April in Kingston, donating their time and talent to perform cataract, glaucoma and other eye

procedures on patients otherwise unable to get treatment.

It was the second trip they've made, teaming up again with the Jamaica Outreach Project, a charity that serves Jamaicans in poverty by providing access to health care procedures, as well as other necessities otherwise out of their reach.

For Byerly, it was her first mission trip to Jamaica. She was invited by Zimm, who is involved with the Jamaica Outreach Project through St. John the Evangelist Church in Naples, which has been working with the Jamaica Outreach Project since 1997.

Byerly said the team started seeing patients early Friday morning,

working that day from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

To get patients to the clinic in the first place, St. Pius X Church, located in an intensely poor section of Kingston, bussed them in. The church works with the Jamaica Outreach Project routinely to help the disadvantaged in the area, and worked with Doctors Outpatient Surgery Center to organize this event.

"Then, we just started doing their surgeries, one after the next," Byerly said.

That day, the doctors performed 31 cataract surgeries and treatments; seven glaucoma procedures;

(From left:) Doctors' Outpatient Surgery Center members Denise Sullivan, Dr. Lynn Byerly, Dr. Jeffrey Zimm, Rebecca Canaday and Carol Stadnyk surround patient Linford Bisnaught.

Dr. Lynn Byerly performing life-changing eye surgery.

Patient Laurel Lewin and Carol Stadnyk of Doctor's Outpatient Surgery Center.

a specialized lid procedure and five pterygium removals. Pterygium, sometimes called surfer's eye, is a growth of tissue on the eye, often growing over the cornea and obstructing vision.

At first, patients needed to be led into the room, but after the surgery they were able to walk out independently.

"It was unbelievable to me how very advanced the Jamaicans' cataracts were," Byerly said. "People were actually going blind from their cataracts, which in this day and age doesn't really happen because cataracts are so fixable."

A lack of financial support from government or insurance, as well as a shortage of local ophthalmologists, are factors leading to extreme poor eye health in the area, Byerly said. Though there is some level of government assistance, many miss the scope of coverage.

For the people who don't have many options, an event like this mission trip is their sole chance to get the surgeries.

But performing surgeries in other countries, particularly in an underserved and under-resourced country, is no simple task. Certain standards and methods met in the U.S. might not be in place in other countries, so physicians who want to perform surgeries are at risk of not having the supplies they need.

"In ophthalmology, a lot of what we do is technology-based," Byerly said. "They haven't been able to find a good way to provide surgical care to these patients until recently."

In a partnership that made it possible, the group teamed up with Dr. Maynard McIntosh, a comprehensive ophthalmologist in Kingston. Staff and doctors at Doctors Outpatient Surgery Center were able to

utilize his private office, state-of-the-art equipment, surgery center, and even a number of his staff members to help accomplish their goal.

Byerly said the mission will continue, adding that they plan to go at least twice a year, and more frequently, if possible, depending on whether the resources are available. For this, much preparation, organization and funding are necessary.

Though getting there is challenging, Byerly felt incredibly rewarded after the experience, remarking that for her and many people, opportunities like this are re-energizing.

"In our training, we learn that one of the goals is to utilize your skills and give back to the community," Byerly said. "There's a lot of satisfaction in offering your talents to help people. That's what drives a lot of us physicians to go into medicine in the first place — to help people." ❁