

CHILDREN OF MAURITIUS MEDICAL AND SURGICAL SUPPORT ASSOCIATION

COMMSSA Western Australia Inc.



JULY 2020 NEWSLETTER

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to this first Newsletter of COMMSSA - Western Australia (Inc), the new name for the Children Of Mauritius Medical and Surgical Support Association, formerly COMMSSA-SACIM (WA) Inc.

I trust that you will find this Newsletter comprehensive and informative. It should remind our members, sponsors and supporters of the road we have travelled on for the last 29 years. Hopefully, it will also inspire new members to join us.

The motion to change our name was passed at a Special General meeting on 19 August 2019 and our new name was ratified on 9 October 2019. What has changed is only the name of our Association, not its objectives. COMMSSA-WA Inc remains firmly focused on the treatment of disadvantaged Mauritian children and continues to work in cooperation with SACIM in Mauritius and with SACIM-Australia in Melbourne.

COMMSSA has, since 1991, helped more than 80 children in Perth. We can confidently say that, with your help, the Management Committee has delivered the goods. Many children who have received our help now lead a normal life; for some, cure was not possible. However, the Association ensures that those children receive adequate follow up, medications and equipment (a Braille machine for one child for example). Because of our limited funds we cannot accept all referred cases; nevertheless, in three instances we have helped SACIM in Mauritius finance the surgery, in India, for three teenagers with severe scoliosis.

Since 2016 many needy children have been referred to COMMSSA for funding of their treatment in Private Hospitals in Mauritius. Our Medical Directors assess all the cases referred and decide which ones can be assisted by COMMSSA and which ones by SACIM-Australia in Melbourne. Unfortunately, the word SACIM in our former name caused much confusion, Accounts and Admin departments too often mistaking COMMSSA-SACIM (WA) for SACIM-Australia or SACIM Mauritius. In some instances, even the parents of children assisted by COMMSSA were under the impression that the financial help had come from SACIM in Mauritius. A change of name was our only option.

With our help, many poor children can now obtain treatment by a dedicated and competent team in Mauritius without their parents having to take time off work to accompany them overseas. It also facilitates our task in Australia where it is getting more difficult to find hosting

families. I am pleased to acknowledge the wonderful cooperation we have enjoyed from Mr Cyril Tuyau, President of SACIM-Australia, in Melbourne; they have financed the treatment for several children at Wellkin Hospital since 2017.

I will now concentrate on matters relating to the social activities of the Association.

Every year, members of the Management Committee organise varied fundraising activities: our main fundraiser is the Annual Dance combined with a Raffle; other functions include the Quiz Night, the Gourmet which follows the AGM, Concerts, Bingo Nights, and , more recently, a Car Rally, a Children's Christmas Party and others.

Unfortunately, getting patrons to attend the functions is proving more difficult and challenging. Last year, for the first time since 1991, we had to cancel our Annual Dance: The Masquerade Ball, scheduled for the 18th of May 2019, had to be cancelled because of poor patronage. That difficult decision was not taken lightly as it also entailed postponing the date of the draw of our yearly Big Raffle.

This year, we faced the same predicament: three weeks prior to the Annual Dance scheduled for Saturday 7 March, we had received confirmation from just over 100 people. Had the event gone ahead at the Siciliani Association, we would have spent a fair amount of our funds for a minimal profit. Instead of cancelling once again, the Committee took the only sensible decision and



Mauritius – not only about Tourism

COMSSA WESTERN AUSTRALIA INC. COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2020



MRS MONIQUE MALIÉ
President



DR MARIAM BAHEMIA
*Vice President and
Medical Director*

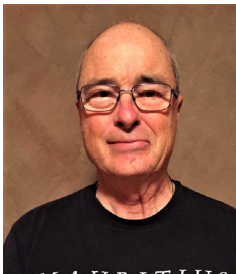


DR SERGE TOUSSAINT
*Secretary and
Medical Director*



MR VIKRAM CONHYEDASS
Treasurer

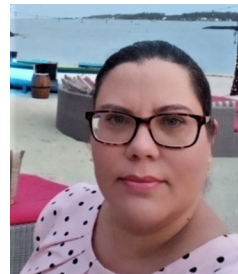
ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS



DR THIERRY VENAILLE



MRS MIRELLA AUGUSTIN



MRS CÉLINE TEMPLIN



MRS PAMELA LILETTE



MR LINDSAY THÉOPHILE



MRS NATHALIE RAMANAH



MS ANAÏS DUCRAY



Photo of Management Committee (2018)



Visit to SACIM (2017)

FROM THE PRESIDENT (CONTINUED)

moved the function to a smaller, less expensive venue.

I can assure you that it was not easy. Having secured a venue, the following issues had to be addressed in 3 days:

- Advise those who had already booked,
- Contact all the members in the hope of attracting more attendees,
- Amend the dance tickets,
- Advise the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor of the venue where the Raffle draw would take place
- Cancel the booked venue. As this was the second year in a row that we were cancelling, we were very lucky not to be penalised with a cancellation fee; instead, thanks to the good relationship we have had with the Management of the Siciliani Association Hall over the years, we received a full refund of \$1000 for the bond and \$1650 for the hall hire fee. I am very grateful to their President.

I apologise to all those who were inconvenienced; we must, and will, do better next year, but in order to so we will need your committed support. It is so disheartening for Members of the Management Committee; they work hard to raise funds and deserve a better response.



Monique – Wellkin Hospital Mauritius (2018)

On a more positive note, the Quiz Night 2019 was so well attended that the hall proved rather small. We had booked the Bayswater Senior Citizens Centre where there is a projector and screen, thereby saving the Association more than \$600. The visual component of the Quiz, provided by Anthony Augustin, enlivened the Quiz and Dr Mariam Bahemia's innovative idea of a silent auction proved very profitable. We will look for a larger venue for our next Quiz Night.

A new event, the Culinary Journey, held in August was a challenge but a huge success. The ingenuity of those who cooked and helped was put to the test. Many patrons commented that they had got good value for money. Still, we managed to make a handsome profit. More food for thought.

Our thanks go to Mario Conier, the coordinator, and to all the committee members who helped him organise a very successful Concert in October last year.

Unfortunately, the Children's Christmas Party had to be

cancelled. We apologise to Jennifer Wishart who had organised her group of helpers and elfs for the occasion. Another event is in the pipeline and we hope that Jennifer will be present.

This year we are looking at hold the AGM on a Saturday afternoon followed by dinner on the premises, but the when and where will depend on the common enemy, COVID-19. You will be kept informed.

I take this opportunity to thank all the sponsors of COMMSSA WA Inc. Our major sponsor, Austral Fisheries continue to make a \$20,000 donation year after year. However, we are grateful to all of you, our sponsors and supporters; your donations, large or small, enable us to achieve our goals. My thanks also go to the President and Executive Committee of the Bayswater Pétanque Club for the free use of their premises twice a year, a gesture that is much appreciated.

I would also like to thank all of you who have put your trust in me as President. Grateful thanks also to the members of the Management Committee who rally when times are tough and work hard at securing sponsorships and organising fundraising activities.

A special thank you to Dr Serge Toussaint and Dr Mariam Bahemia who meet regularly to assess all the cases referred from Mauritius. They also give freely of their time in organising and attending workshops in Mauritius for the Nurse Education Program which they initiated in 2017. I must stress here that, contrary to what some people may think, whenever Dr Toussaint, Dr Bahemia and I go to Mauritius on COMMSSA business, our trips are self-funded

As for you, the members, who have shown your support for COMMSSA over so many years, I realise that many of you can no longer support us as actively as you used to; but let us all, as we age, target the younger generation and foster in them the desire to pick up and carry the flame that COMMSSA's founding members lit up nearly 30 years ago to help disadvantaged Children of Mauritius. So much done and yet so much still to do.

For the Association's 30th anniversary in 2021, we hope to celebrate in style; we shall aim for our functions to reflect this milestone. After this current period of forced inactivity, we will need to refocus and try to raise some much-needed funds. For that, we will need YOU, YOUR ATTENDANCE and YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS. Ask yourselves how you can help; put your hand up and be our ambassadors with your family, friends, colleagues.

We would love to hear from you: do contact us and send us your feedback and suggestions. You will find our email address on our new website www.commssa.org.au which will soon be ready.

I believe that Coronavirus has had a big impact on every single one of us. Somehow we must rally; let us all work together to make 2021 a truly exceptional year.

Monique Malié

President and Co-Founder

COMMSSA-Western Australia Inc.

FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR

In 2001 I inherited the role of Medical Director of COMSSA-SACIM (WA) from Dr Harry Dumbell. For the past four years, which stand out as the busiest that COMSSA has known since 1991, I have been fortunate to have by my side, Dr Mariam Bahemia as Co-Pilot. It is reassuring for me to know that Mariam will be there to hold the reins as Medical Director of COMSSA-Western Australia in future years.

Our Association is now financing the treatment of more disadvantaged children in Mauritius than in Perth as a result of several factors:

- 1) The diminishing number of referrals from SACIM in Mauritius.
- 2) The increasing cost of treatment in Australia.
- 3) The fact that there are now, in the private sector in Mauritius, excellent facilities where Dr Kevin Teerovengadam (paediatric surgeon) and Dr Ryad Joomye (paediatric intensive care physician) are undertaking surgery on very complex cases with outstanding results. A visiting Orthopaedic surgeon from Reunion island, Dr Mohamed L'Kaissi, has recently been accredited to perform surgery at C-Care -formerly Wellkin- Hospital in Moka. The team also includes Dr François Leung, a well-known paediatrician.

In November 2016, Dr Teerovengadam and Dr Joomye requested our financial assistance for the treatment, in Mauritius, of some 25 children from poor families. Towards the end of 2016 and throughout 2017 Dr Mariam Bahemia and I met on many occasions to consider the cases and make recommendations to the Management Committee of COMSSA and to Mr Cyril Tuyau, President of SACIM-Australia in Melbourne. Our close cooperation with SACIM-Australia is exemplified by the case of a baby born with complex abnormalities in February 2017: the cost of treatment was \$43,000, the family and friends raised \$23,000; COMSSA and SACIM-Australia each contributed approximately \$10,000.

In March 2017 Dr Teerovengadam confirmed our suspicions that there was a lack of adequate expertise in Mauritius for the management of children with a colostomy or urostomy. To Mariam and to me the training of Mauritian stoma care nurses loomed large as a need that had to be addressed. How could COMSSA make a difference?

In April 2017, the WA Ostomy Association put us in contact with Mrs Elizabeth English AM, Clinical Practice Consultant in Stoma and Wound care in Adelaide and a world authority on Enterostomal Nursing Education in developing countries. Elizabeth English kindly agreed to travel with us to Mauritius on a fact-finding mission. Mariam and I joined Monique Malié, our President, and Elizabeth English in Mauritius from 15-21 November 2017. Thanks to Monique, who dealt with all the logistical issues, a great deal was accomplished in those 6 days. In September 2018 and in October 2019, Elizabeth English, assisted by Sharon Boxall from Western Australia, held 5-Day Stoma and Wound Care Nursing Education Programs at the Nursing Council of Mauritius. At the

request of the local Health Commissioner they also ran workshops in Rodrigues on 30 and 31 October 2019. Dr Mariam Bahemia will have more to say about those visits.

Thanks to the assistance of Mrs Jenny Dee, Australian High Commissioner in Mauritius, we have established strong contacts with The Ministry of Health and Wellness in Mauritius and with Curtin University. COMSSA has built a solid platform from which the training of Enterostomal Therapy Nurses in Mauritius is under way to becoming a reality. Such training will improve the care for thousands of Mauritians with stoma, wound and continence problems. Meanwhile we continue to assist disadvantaged children for treatment in Mauritius or when they are sent to us by SACIM for surgery in Perth.

SACIM in Mauritius in 1968, SACIM-Victoria (now SACIM-Australia) in 1973, and COMSSA in 1991 were founded with a common objective, to help needy children suffering from conditions inoperable in Mauritius. As a result of changes made to its Constitution in 2007, COMSSA can now provide assistance to children who are being treated in Mauritius. With the Enterostomal Nurse training Project we are going one significant step further.

Over the past 30 years our Association has done some excellent work in raising funds to help many disadvantaged Mauritian children and their families. We can, indeed, be pleased with what has been achieved. Does it mean that we should now look back and say, "Mission Accomplished"? I strongly believe that we should not; there are still too many more children who need our assistance and we thank you for standing by our side along the journey.

Dr Serge Toussaint

Medical Director and Co-Founder
COMSSA-Western Australia (Inc).

FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

It is a great honour but an enormous responsibility to represent COMSSA as assistant medical director, and as Vice President.

I have had the pleasure of working closely with the president, Ms Monique Malie and the medical director, Dr Serge Toussaint. We meet at least every four weeks. At our meetings we take the time to discuss and carefully consider each of the cases directed to us for consideration of financial assistance. It is not always an easy task; some of the cases are complex, some children we might not be able to assist, but at the heart of every discussion we are mindful of the objectives of the Association and our responsibilities to the members of COMSSA.

In early 2017, it became apparent that there was a need for Specialist Nurse training in Mauritius, specifically for stoma and wound care. It was a lightbulb moment for Serge; I was there when he became illuminated with enthusiasm and determination. Before I knew it, we were meeting with people from the Ostomy Association in Perth, and Serge began contacting various people in Mauritius and Australia, to make the dream become reality. Always dedicated to the task, Serge enlisted the help of Mrs

Elizabeth English AM, from Adelaide. Together they spent countless hours over days, weeks and months organising a fact-finding trip to Mauritius to see whether the nurses were ready to be taught the necessary skills for stoma care. In November 2017, accompanied by Monique Malié in Mauritius, Elizabeth, Serge and I met with doctors, nurses and members of the Nursing Council. At Wellkin Hospital Elizabeth English ran an introductory workshop in stoma care which was very well received. We also met several children and their families who have been assisted by COMMSSA and SACIM-Australia. After the successful visit in 2017, a 5-Day Ostomy and Wound Nurse Education Program was arranged for 2018.

Unfortunately, Serge was not able to join us for the 5-Day Program which was presented in September 2018 by Mrs Elizabeth English and Ms Sharon Boxall from Perth. I was happy to represent COMMSSA at the opening, which was attended by representatives from the Ministry of Health and the Nursing Council of Mauritius. By all accounts, the course was well received. The nurses I spoke to were grateful for their newly acquired skills and felt inspired to learn more and go further.

While we were in Mauritius, Monique and I met with members of the Accounts department at Wellkin Hospital. Ever the talented and skilled negotiator, Monique ensured that everything should be clear and in order before COMMSSA commits money for surgery and the care of children in need.

On our way back from the hospital we visited Andrew Paya, a teenager who had surgery on his hip in Perth in 2012. Serge and I had examined him during our visit in 2017, and it was good to see that he was still doing well. Both Monique and I encouraged him to stay at his best.

Fast forward to late 2019; after another year of meetings, negotiations, face time meetings with Drs Teerovengadam and Joomye, Serge, Monique and I travelled back to Mauritius for another 5-Day Stoma and Wound care training course.

During the year Monique, Serge and I had met with Professor Lina Pelliccione, the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Curtin Mauritius, and with the Australian High Commissioner to Mauritius, the Hon Jenny Dee, when they transited in Perth. We stressed the importance of ongoing dialogue for the advancement of COMMSSA's Stoma and Wound Care project in Mauritius; their positive response was encouraging.

Another successful 5-Day Nurse Education Program was presented by Mrs Elizabeth English and Ms Sharon Boxall at the Nursing Council of Mauritius from 21 to 25 October 2019. At Curtin University Mauritius at the Charles Telfair Institute campus, we were met by Professor Pelliccione. She was interested in what COMMSSA had in mind regarding specialised education for nurses in Mauritius. We visited the Mauritius Institute of Health in Pamplemousses, as well as Wellkin Hospital where we had discussions with Administration, Admissions and Accounts staff. There, Elizabeth and Sharon met with nurses, provided education, and visited children on the wards to share their expertise with the nurses caring for them. We are grateful to Elizabeth and Sharon for their

teaching skills and enthusiasm.

We were very honoured to be invited to dinner by the Hon Jenny Dee at the beautiful premises of the Australian High Commission in Floreal. Other guests at the dinner on 28 October included Mr Laurent Musango, representative of the WHO, Professor Pelliccione, Mr Francis Supparayen, the Registrar of the Nursing Council, and Mr Feroze Lallmahomed from the Ministry of Health.

At the invitation of Mr Simon-Pierre Roussety, the Health Commissioner for Rodrigues, another exciting opportunity arose which enabled us to take Elizabeth and Sharon to Rodrigues, to visit patients, tour the hospital, and provide education for the receptive and eager nurses.



**Australian High Commission Dinner
with Mrs Jenny Dee (October 2019)**

On 30 October, a short, one and a half day course was opened by the Hon Jenny Dee, Mr Roussety and Dr Serge Toussaint. Later that day we were taken to the home of a man for whom care of his stoma provides a challenge. He is the type of patient who would benefit from the expertise of specially trained nurses and we would love to see fully trained stoma and wound care nurses in Rodrigues to attend to patients such as these. The nurses there are keen, interested and ready to undergo such further education. Rodrigues left a lasting impression. It was my first visit to the island, and I hope it will not be my last.

One of the highlights during each of the visits I made in 2017, 2018, and 2019, was visiting Wellkin hospital and meeting many of the children you, the members of COMMSSA have been generous enough to assist. Each year you pay your membership fees, attend our fundraising events, and buy our raffle tickets. Few of you meet the recipients of your generosity and kindness, yet you continue to donate to COMMSSA every year, because you know the money will assist children in genuine need.

Monique, Serge and I met with children and their families, many of whom were moved by the generosity of people who live thousands of miles away, whom they will never meet to say, "Thank you".

I would like to take the opportunity to thank our sponsors and all the members and friends of COMMSSA who continue to support this worthy cause.

Dr Mariam Bahemia

Medical Director and Vice-President
COMMSSA-Western Australia (Inc.)

THE COMMSSA WESTERN AUSTRALIA INC.

STOMA CARE PROJECT - MAURITIUS

5-Day Stoma and Wound care Nursing Education Program - September 2018

From Elizabeth English STN (Stomal Therapy Nurse)

WHAT IS A STOMAL THERAPY NURSE?

A Stomal Therapy Nurse (STN) is a nurse trained in stoma, wound and continence care. Australia is well developed in this nursing specialty, with the Australian Association of Stomal Therapy Nurses (AASTN) as the national body and the World Council of Enterostomal Therapists (WCET) as the global organisation.

Elizabeth English, based in Adelaide, has been a STN for more than 30 years. She is a life member of both WCET and AASTN. She was a member of the WCET Executive for 14 years serving as the Education Committee Chairperson as well as Vice President and President of the organisation. In 2012 she was awarded an AM (Member of the Order of Australia) for services to nursing.

In March 2017 an alert was raised by Dr Serge Toussaint and Dr Mariam Bahemia, the Medical Directors of a Perth based charity, the Children Of Mauritius Medical and Surgical Support Association, (COMMSSA for short). They were alarmed by reports of inadequate care of children who had had stomas performed in Mauritius. With the financial support of COMMSSA in Perth and SACIM-Australia in Melbourne, Dr Kevin Teerovengadam, paediatric surgeon, had operated on several children, born with ano-rectal and urological abnormalities. He had confirmed that there was a definite need for improvement in stoma care in Mauritius.

As a result of this perceived need, I was contacted and invited to be part of a fact-finding mission, funded by COMMSSA, to assess the situation. In November 2017, I travelled to Mauritius, accompanied by Dr Serge Toussaint, Dr Mariam Bahemia and Mrs Monique Malie, the President of COMMSSA.

Usually it takes a long time to find the right contacts and organise meetings; not in Mauritius. Thanks to Monique's networking skills, and the medical input of Serge and Mariam, everything just happened! We hit the ground running and the pace kept up.

Soon after our arrival we met with Dr Kevin Teerovengadam, Dr Ryad Joomye, paediatric Intensive Care paediatrician and Dr François Leung, paediatrician. The next morning during a visit to Wellkin Private Hospital, Dr Teerovengadam took us on a ward round to see some of his in-patients. The following day I conducted a seminar for 50 nurses at Wellkin Hospital and met with the Director of Nursing and Nurse Educators of the hospital, as well as representatives of companies selling stoma, wound and continence care products in Mauritius. Appointments were also made with the Registrar of the Nursing Council of Mauritius in Quatre Bornes and the Chairperson of the Mauritian Nurses Association in Beau Bassin.

I was privileged to join Monique, Serge and Mariam on a visit to the office of SACIM (Society for Aid to Children

Inoperable in Mauritius) where we met the SACIM Committee and many of the children whose surgery in Australia had been financed by COMMSSA and by SACIM-Australia. We also visited Clinique Fortis Darné and Medisave Clinic. Even on departure day, on my way to the airport, we managed to visit the paediatric section of the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital in Rose Belle.



Children's Ward - Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, Mauritius

What a trip that was!! I remain amazed by what was achieved in just 6 days. After such a positive start and having seen the enthusiasm expressed during my visit, I knew that Mauritius was ready for the training of STNs. I left Mauritius already thinking of a return visit in 2018.

With Serge's help, in May 2018 a detailed proposal was sent to the Mauritian Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and to all relevant stake holders in Mauritius and Rodrigues. I suggested a 5-Day Stoma and Wound Nurse Education Program for, ideally, 20 participants to allow adequate hands on simulated practice. My STN colleague Sharon Boxall, from Western Australia, was invited to join the team to assist me with the teaching.

As funding budgeted for this second visit was not forthcoming from Mauritius, COMMSSA decided to pick up the tab and went ahead with plans for us to conduct the 5-Day program. Their main sponsor in Perth, Austral Fisheries, provided logistical assistance with transport for the duration of the visit. Many of the questions we had asked of the Nursing Council having remained unanswered, Sharon and I had no idea what to expect; nevertheless we decided to "go with the flow" as we had been used to do in Kenya. So off we flew to Mauritius in September 2018.

The Nursing Council of Mauritius had kindly offered their premises for the 5-Day program. We had been told that our Nurse Education program would be the first to take place in their new premises. An auspicious and momentous occasion. However, upon arrival, we found that the Nursing Council were still in the process of moving. Not surprisingly, there were some glitches.

Instead of 20 attendees we had 47; in addition to the nurses, we also had members of the Nursing Council, nursing administrators and various educators. There

were representatives from virtually every hospital on the island and even from the hospital in Rodrigues. Trade representatives had also responded positively to our invitation to a round robin trade fair.

In retrospect it was good that there were, amongst those present, administrators and people not directly involved with stomas or wounds; they now understand that the role of the STN is far more than caring for stomas; the nurses are taught the skills to manage wounds of all types: venous and arterial leg ulcers, the diabetic foot, pressure injuries, long term fistulae, tube drains and more. Their training also covers the management of incontinence.

The Mauritian Government is to be congratulated for having recognised the needs of the diabetic population in Mauritius; there are a few specialist diabetic nurses dedicated to the needs of this large patient group. It is our hope that Enterostomal Therapy Nurses (Stoma, Wound and Continence Nurses) will be the next specialist nursing group to be approved in Mauritius.

I had asked the Nursing Council if they would invite ostomates (people with a stoma) to a session within the program. Sadly, this suggestion was not promoted. I was disappointed, as I know how valuable such a session can be. Fortunately, I had been alerted by a STN colleague in Melbourne that there was a patient in Mauritius who was struggling with a new stoma; could I contact him?

I visited him at his home and was made very welcome. I found the most amazing man with a loving, caring wife and daughter; they had no idea how to care for his stoma and how to cope. With some donated products I had with me I was able to make him leak-and-odour-free, ease his anxiety and reassure his family. He was keen to talk about his experience. Monique arranged his transport and he was the only patient to attend the ostomates' session.

And what an amazing session it was. He talked from the heart, did not blame individuals but wished that the system were more efficient; he explained that some nurses had no idea what a stoma was, did not have the skills to assist him and even seemed to disregard his needs. He had had several accidents with faeces spilling onto the bed because of his own as well as the nurses' lack of training. He described how he was expected to cope on his own, with inappropriate products and how sad, desperate and frightened he was. An eloquent speaker, he talked about the psychological effect it had had on him and on his family. There was hardly a dry eye in the audience.

The need for improved stoma care in Mauritius is SO OBVIOUSLY PRESSING.

The most important thing achieved so far in Mauritius is Awareness. Awareness of the role of the STN. Awareness that patients are finding it difficult to get the right equipment or to find a nurse with the necessary skills and experience. Awareness of the crucial need for the Stomal Therapy Nursing specialty in Mauritius.

Who has been made aware?

- The Ministry of Health
- The Nursing Council

- The Mauritius Institute of Health (MIH) - the training arm of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.
- The Nurses registered in the program; they acknowledged the great need for further training and indicated their keenness to embrace specialist STN education.

Thanks to Monique I met with the Executive Director of the MIH; I now have a clearer understanding of the requirements for specialised nurse training in Mauritius. This will help me draw up a curriculum that should stand up to scrutiny and be approved by the MIH.

Although Mauritian nurses could travel overseas to complete STN training, it would be more economical and preferable for overseas STN nursing educators to conduct the training in Mauritius. This could be done by organising a Twinning Program through WCET. Nurses thus trained by WCET accredited educators would themselves become nurse educators and would train more specialist STNs for the future. This is the long-term goal.



Course participants - 5-Day Stoma and Wound Care Education Program, Mauritius Nursing Council (2018)

Another Stoma and Wound Nurse Education Program in Mauritius and possibly Rodrigues is planned for October 2019. It is hoped that the Ministry of Health will fund this program and will support the application to the MIH for a full WCET approved training program perhaps in 2020.

I would like to acknowledge the role played by Dr Serge Toussaint and Dr Mariam Bahemia in identifying the need for Stomal Therapy Nurses in Mauritius and for their commitment to do something about it by initiating this project. Together with Mrs Monique Malie, the President and driving force behind COMMSSA in Perth, they make a formidable team. Sharon and I thank them for inviting us on board and making us so welcome.

Passion, persistence and vision is our motto.

REPORT ON 2019 MAURITIUS AND RODRIGUES NURSE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Seeding Stomal Therapy in Mauritius

From Sharon Boxall (RN)

The author Mark Twain once said, "Mauritius was made first and then heaven: and heaven was copied after Mauritius." It is not surprising to see why this beautiful island has become a favourite destination for international tourists seeking a temporary slice of Paradise. Mauritius appears to have blossomed since reaching independence in 1968. From a health perspective, the multiracial and multilingual population of nearly 1.3 million inhabitants seems well served by five regional government hospitals, two district hospitals, a psychiatric hospital and several private hospitals and clinics. This equates to more than 3700 beds in government health institutions and nearly 700 beds in the private sector. There are just over 4000 qualified Nurses and Midwives in Mauritius, including a few nurses specialising in Diabetes. Sadly, at this stage, there is no formally established and recognised educational program for nurses to be trained in Stoma and Wound care in Mauritius. This lack was identified in 2017 and I am pleased to say that moves are now afoot to correct it.

In 2018, alongside Elizabeth English, I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to be involved in delivering the first 5-day Stoma and Wound Nurse Education Program for Mauritian nurses. Tough gig, but someone must do it.



Sharon Boxall and Elizabeth English

To start with, I would like to acknowledge that I am not the main player in this project. The seed for it was planted in March 2017 when an alert was raised by Dr Serge Toussaint and Dr Mariam Bahemia, the Medical



Mauritius, a Paradise – but not for all.

Directors of a Perth based Mauritian charity, COMMSSA, the Children of Mauritius Medical and Surgical Support Association. With the collaboration of Elizabeth English, in November 2017, the seed germinated into a fact-finding mission to Mauritius which included Elizabeth, Dr Toussaint, Dr Bahemia and Mrs Monique Malié, President of COMMSSA. That mission, during which the learning needs of Mauritian nurses were identified, is covered in detail by Elizabeth in a separate report.

Based in Adelaide, Elizabeth English has been involved in educational programs in China, the Philippines, Iran, Indonesia and Kenya. Evidently COMMSSA were impressed with Elizabeth, her ability, and her productivity; that led to further growth of the germinated seed with the planning of an Introductory 5-Day Stoma and Wound Care Nurse Education Program for 2018. I have previous experience delivering wound and stomal education in Tanzania and Kenya where I worked with Elizabeth; she invited me to join her to teach in Mauritius in September 2018.

The introductory course we taught in Mauritius in 2018 covered anatomy and physiology of the GIT tract, surgical interventions which result in stoma formation, assessment and management of wounds and stomas, how to select appropriate products and how to provide patient education. Information was provided on lymphoedema management, the diabetic foot, pressure injuries and compression bandaging. Practical sessions provided participants with the opportunity to measure and cut baseplates, manage leaking drainage tubes, and gain some hands-on familiarity with a wide variety of appliances.

In 2019, from 21-25 October, we delivered a second 5-Day Stoma and Wound Care Nurse Education Program. A different group of 35 nurses, from public and private hospitals attended the course at the premises of the Nursing Council in Mauritius, by then a somewhat more suitable venue than it had been in 2018. Elizabeth and I again witnessed the keenness and readiness of Mauritian nurses to embrace training as STNs.

On 30 October, together with the COMMSSA team, we travelled to the neighbouring island of Rodrigues at the request of the local Health Commissioner. There we

delivered an introductory 1.5 day course on stoma and wound care to nurses from the local public hospital. The courses were funded by COMSSA with essential logistical assistance being provided by their major sponsor, Austral Fisheries.

1. Challenges

Teaching on unfamiliar ground does not go without challenges. In 2018 The Nursing Council of Mauritius had kindly offered their premises for the 5-Day program. We had not anticipated that they would still be in the process of moving in when we arrived. Not surprisingly, there were some glitches. In addition to the poor acoustics, which obliged us to lecture in the entrance lobby, a projector that blew up, we also had to cope with a larger than expected number of participants, that made our equipment preparations for practical classes somewhat under resourced. Still, we managed.

2. Joys

We had a huge variety of attendees, ranging from student nurses, through practising RNs, Diabetes educators (14.2% of Mauritians are diagnosed with diabetes and The Mauritius Diabetes Foundation estimates 50% of the population have either diabetes or pre-diabetes)

As always, our practical sessions were a delight, even if a little noisy. Observing impromptu peer to peer education by some of the students provided an opportunity for us to identify potential champions or future STNs (Stomal Therapy Nurses).

Trade representatives had also responded positively to our invitation to a round robin trade fair. This format proved popular with delegates and industry alike. For many participants (both students and trade), it was the first time they had attended a trade display.

3. What has been achieved so far in Mauritius?

In addition to the direct benefits associated with teaching Stoma and Wound care to 47 nurses in 2018 and over 50



Training course in progress.



Medical Directors and Elizabeth English

in 2019 (in Mauritius and Rodrigues combined), valuable progress has been made in raising awareness of the role of Enterostomal Therapy Nurses.

We have identified Champions in the group who have the passion and vision to become pioneers and be trained as the first STN nurses in the country. This will involve their completing a full Stoma, Wound and Continence Program conducted to world standards and recognised by the World Council of Enterostomal Therapists.

4. The Future

Elizabeth English and I hope to return to Mauritius to run a third 5-day Stoma and Wound Care Nurse Education Program and an additional two-day course on the nearby Island of Rodrigues. It is hoped that this will provide a firm foundation for the establishment of a formal twinning project between Australia and Mauritius.

The Norma N Gill Fund Twinning Projects were first established in 1999, with the aim of increasing awareness of the disparity between developed and emerging countries with regard to wound, ostomy and continence care and fostering links between Enterostomal Therapy Nurses in developed countries and registered nurses in emerging countries. The overarching goal of the NNGF Twinning Project is to promote and develop the specialty of Enterostomal Therapy Nursing.

Two activities associated with twinning are the provision of onsite training in an emerging country by Enterostomal Therapy Nurses from a developed country and assistance to set up a formal Enterostomal Therapy Nursing Education Program or a Recognized Educational Program under the auspices of the WCET Education Committee.

Ultimately the sole aim of this project, initiated by COMSSA, is to help Mauritius progress towards sustainability in the provision of Stomal Therapy Nurse education.

The training of specialised Stomal Therapy Nurses will have far-reaching effects not only for those with a stoma but also for those with wound and continence care needs. It will make such a difference in the lives of thousands of Mauritians of all ages. I look forward to being part of this life-changing development.

“No act of kindness however small is ever wasted”

Kindness and Giving enable us to be truly human. We can all be givers, we can all help alleviate the pain of others in so many ways; whether it be with a smile, a text message, a phone call, or by giving of one's time, attending a fundraising event, donating gifts or money.

When I came to Perth in 2008, I met a group of people who have given nearly 30 years of their lives to help sick Mauritian children. As members of the Management Committee of COMMSSA, some for a short time, others since the foundation of the Association in 1991, every one of them has given freely of themselves to make it all happen.

It reminded me that I come from a family of givers. I was taught at a young age that there is nothing better than opening your hearts to others and giving what you have, however little it may seem.

This why I am on COMMSSA's Management Committee, this is what drives me to keep on giving my time and energy. Meeting the children when they come to Perth is a blessing; seeing their happy smiles and witnessing the relief on their parent's faces after successful treatment is quite uplifting and rewarding.

On the other hand, every time I hear about those other cases in Mauritius, those young ones with such severe ailments, whose parents turn to doctors in private hospitals for treatment they cannot afford, every time we are told of such cases my heart skips a beat. Every time I have this knot at the bottom of my stomach and then the only question that matters is ... how can I be even kinder?

I believe that, as a Committee, we can still do more, with your help we can still give more.

The Universe offers us this constant opportunity to be kind to one another, in whichever way we choose, no matter how big or small.

I choose KINDNESS and GIVING.

Pam Lilette



Félicité Family - R&R with Thierry

For many years, my wife, Lisebie, and I had helped in the background, primarily with cooking at functions held by COMMSSA. We were aware of the objectives of the Association and of the huge amount of work done by the members of the Management Committee.

We were overwhelmed by their dedication and commitment. That is why, several years ago, I decided to step forward and was elected on the Management Committee. I have not, for one moment, regretted my decision.

Elected Treasurer in 2018, I became even more acutely aware of how difficult it can be to raise funds and how all donations, large or small, are used to make a difference in the lives of Mauritian children and their families. It is a great privilege to have been an active member of such a wonderful organisation as COMMSSA.

Lindsay Théophile

My name is Mirella. I joined COMMSSA-SACIM (now known as COMMSSA-Western Australia Inc.) as a Management Committee member approximately 7 years ago. I thoroughly enjoy being a Committee member and help in any way I can with the help of Jacques my husband.

Jacques and I have four healthy grandchildren. It breaks our heart to hear the illnesses of so many disadvantaged children in Mauritius who need our help.

It must be so very hard for the parents to cope with having a sick child:

1. Can our child be treated in Mauritius?
2. How will we afford the cost of treatment?

Every year COMMSSA holds a number of functions to raise funds to meet the cost of surgical and medical treatment for those poor children. DO HELP US by attending the functions with your family and friends. PLEASE DO SUPPORT COMMSSA-Western Australia (Inc.) by becoming a member.

Thank you.

Mirella Augustin



Children's Xmas Party – Monique, Mirella, Pamela, Izabelle

WE WISH TO EXTEND A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



Paul Geelen & Jenny Geelen
Artificial Eye Services



As a business with steady commercial activity in Mauritius we felt that it was only right and proper that we give something back to the community that support us.

It is impossible to visit the island without seeing, amongst the natural beauty and glamorous resorts, a section of the population that is struggling for basic needs let alone the many children who need essential treatment for complex medical problems.

These factors, combined with a friendship of long standing with Dr Serge Toussaint, Medical Director and co-founder of COMMSSA (Children Of Mauritius Medical and Surgical Support Association) and the tireless, selfless efforts of all at COMMSSA to assist needy Mauritian children since 1991 gave us the assurance that our contributions of cash would be well managed and directed where it is needed most. It is for these reasons that we have been proud supporters of COMMSSA-Western Australia (Inc.).

Mr David Carter
CEO AUSTRAL FISHERIES
Perth, Western Australia



Children of Mauritius Medical and Surgical Support Association

COMMSSA Western Australia Inc.



COMMSSA – Western Australia Inc. provides financial assistance for the treatment of disadvantaged children from Mauritius and Rodrigues.



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