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No Time Was Lost

By Michèle Clavery

Our conference has come and gone, but the memories are such that expectations for the well-being of the our organization, the Alzheimer's Association of Trinidad and Tobago, AzATT and the future of citizens of our country with regard to our aging population, are high. The response to the conference, especially from our Ministry of Health, left no doubt that AzATT will begin to see tangible results in the future.

This month's column will be a presentation of brief reflections on the two and a half days of sharing and collaborating at the **4th ADI Non-Latin Caribbean Conference on Alzheimer's and Other Dementias**, held at the Radisson Hotel Trinidad.

At the last publication, I spoke about the conference theme, *No Time To Lose*. At the conference opening, highlights included remarks and presentations from various presenters/invitees. Mr. Dale Goldhawk, Vice Chair of Alzheimer's Disease International ADI, lost no time in bringing greetings from ADI, assuring attendees of ADI's continued interest in supporting organizations present. Mrs. Norma Inniss, Conference Chair and Past President and Founder of AzATT, spoke on developing Alzheimer's associations in the Caribbean. Mr. Marc Wortmann, outgoing Executive Director of ADI, addressed dementia as a global, regional and national public health and social priority. The Honourable Terrence Deyalsingh, Minister of Health in the government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, spoke of Trini-

dad and Tobago's response to the dementia pandemic. The President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, His Excellency Anthony Carmona, brought remarks which were well received. The Vote of Thanks fell to the Regional Representative of ADI, Dr. Raymond Jessurun.

The speakers/presenters highlighted above give an indication of the urgency of involvement necessary to attend to issues of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Alzheimer's disease is serious business. It was most heartening to hear the words of the Honourable Minister of Health, for example, as he pledged his Ministry's support. The Minister declared his position to partner with Alzheimer's Association of Trinidad and Tobago, AzATT, to formulate a plan for Dementia in Trinidad and Tobago. He was very enthusiastic, and his presentation did augur well for the local association.

A bird's eye view of conference attendees will give some indication of the level of seriousness and commitment of other countries.

The Non-Latin Caribbean comprises 32 countries and territories that make up the English, Dutch, and French Caribbean. In 15 of these countries and territories, there are national Alzheimer's Associations, eight of which are ADI members. Representatives to the conference came from these Associations and include the following countries:

- Aruba Alzheimer's Foundation
- Barbados Alzheimer's Association
- Belize Alzheimer's Association
- Alzheimer's Family Support Group Bermuda
- Bonaire Alzheimer's Foundation

- Cayman Islands Alzheimer's and Dementia Association
- Curaçao Alzheimer's foundation
- Dominica Dementia Foundation
- Alzheimer's Jamaica
- St. Kitts and Nevis Alzheimer's Association
- St. Lucia Alzheimer's Association
- St. Maarten Alzheimer's Foundation
- Suriname Dementia Foundation
- British Virgin Islands Alzheimer's Association
- Alzheimer's Association of Trinidad and Tobago

Several other countries and territories have, what has been identified as, emerging interest groups. These include Bahamas, Grenada, Guyana, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Guadeloupe and Martinique. The list as outlined above, as well as those other territories expressing interest, is an indicator that the Caribbean recognizes the urgency of dealing with what has been termed a pandemic.

Involvement by these territories is testimony to the gravity of the situation as it relates to predictions. Be reminded that by 2050, over one million people in the Caribbean region will be affected by Alzheimer's disease.

This prediction must awaken each of us—including young people—to the stark reality of what this disease means, not only to families and caregivers but to a wider society.

I end on this note. The future, with regard to the Caribbean response to Alzheimer's disease, is promising. The launch of the Alzheimer's Associations of the Caribbean signals that promise.