



From its very beginning the Jamaica Outreach Program (JOP) has dedicated many mission trips to the eye clinic on the compound of St. Pius X in Kingston. Those trips are made possible through the service of the lay missionaries who visit there two or three times a year. The journey to improved sight is a long and involved process for those Jamaican patients who are in need of corneal transplant surgeries. This type of surgery is not available in Jamaica and therein lies an untold story about what the JOP does to make a difference in the lives of the people we meet at our clinics.

In August 2013, while working at the JOP eye clinic in Kingston, Dr. Jeffrey Zimm identified nine patients who would benefit from corneal transplant surgery. Since then, four of those patients have come to Naples and benefited from the transplants with Dr. Zimm and his staff performing the surgeries at no charge and other out-of-pocket expenses paid by donor-sponsors (sometimes supplemented by the patient's own fundraising efforts) . The process for these patients is a long one involving many people who help them along their way to a more perfect sight and a better life.

The following report has been submitted by Dr Zimm's surgery coordinator, Alison Burberry:

When Dr Zimm identifies a patient who would benefit from a corneal transplant, the patient is then put on a priority list based on age and the severity of the problem. The need for a corneal transplant is usually from keratoconus (a corneal dystrophy), or infections causing scarring or trauma. Once the patient has been identified and the JOP has found a donor willing to fund the costs associated with the transplant, Dr. Zimm writes a letter to support the granting of a non-immigrant visa by the U.S. embassy in Kingston.

The average out-of-pocket cost of a transplant is \$ 5,000. Corneal tissue is \$3,200 and visa applications, air flights, post-op prescriptions and surgery center fees account for the rest of the cost. In many cases host families are arranged by the JOP for our patients who generally come for

a 10-day stay. During that time, a patient is placed with host families for three or four days each. The hosts provide shelter, sustenance, and transportation for their guests. While in Naples, the patient undergoes a pre-operative exam, the surgery, and several post-operative exams by Dr Zimm.

In our dealings with Jamaicans, we have been impressed with their graciousness, patience, and gratitude. The entire surgical team is also impressed by the dedication of the JOP and its commitment to the eye care mission. We are fortunate to work hand in hand with them.

Anyone interested in serving as host for a future corneal transplant patient or interested donors are invited to contact us through this website.

