



## Editorial

## The birth of the Caribbean Society of Endoscopic Surgeons-A historical article-



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## ABSTRACT

The Caribbean Society of Endoscopic Surgeons (CaSES) is a regional surgical organization that acts as a quality-enhancing body for the Caribbean region. It does so through many activities including an annual regional meeting. In this historical article, the history, purpose and future developments of the organization is outlined.

## 1. Introduction

In April 2013 at the 3rd annual laparoscopic training course in Curaçao, which was started as a hosting platform to promote and teach safe advanced laparoscopic surgery in the Caribbean in 2011 by Dr Patrick Fa Si Oen of Curaçao and Dr. Gerrit Slooter of the Netherlands, eight regional leaders of this type of surgery met to discuss the practice of Endoscopic Surgery in the Caribbean on invitation of Prof. David Rosin and Dr. Patrick Fa Si Oen.

At this dinner meeting in a local fish restaurant on the 27th of April 2013 among a group of dedicated regional experts and friends, the concept of the Caribbean Society of Endoscopic Surgeons was born.

## 2. Regional history

Laparoscopic General Surgery, which was introduced in the late 1980s in Europe and the United States of America commenced in Barbados, Curaçao, Trinidad and Jamaica in a small way in the mid 1990s. As in most parts of the world, the first general surgical operation to be performed was the laparoscopic cholecystectomy.

In Barbados for example, open cholecystectomy ceased once a number of surgeons mastered the laparoscopic technique.

As in most low output, low income regions, more advanced endoscopic surgery took longer to enter the armamentarium of the majority due to the lack of expertise, infrastructure and materials.

Over the years this began to change in the Caribbean as regional leaders emerged. Professor David Rosin having met many of the surgeons of the Caribbean at a meeting in Barbados with the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 2001 was invited to demonstrate and teach more advanced laparoscopic operations such as funduplications, splenectomies and various hernia repairs, concurrently a younger regional generation of surgeons attained fellowships in laparoscopic surgery in the United States of America and Europe. They brought their knowledge and expertise to the region as they started their different practices around the 2000's.

The eight surgeons at the meeting included Professor Rosin (Barbados), Professor Dan (Trinidad), Dr. Fa Si Oen (Curaçao),

Professor Cawich (then Jamaica now Trinidad), Dr. Maharaj (Trinidad), Dr. Simpson (Jamaica), Dr. Singh (Trinidad) and Dr. Ponson (Aruba). The common concern of these surgeons was that laparoscopic surgery would be increasingly introduced in the region by international development and patient demand it and that there was a need for this introduction to be safe and quality controlled to protect the patients, the techniques and the practitioners.

Such a platform had to ensure a positive and open teaching environment. It was decided to form a Society to promote more advances in endoscopic surgery for the benefit of all patients in the Caribbean as well as to ensure regional quality standards, safe surgery and protection of our patients through regulated training, practice and audit.

Professor Rosin was asked to guide them in forming this Society as he had founded the Society of Minimally Invasive General Surgeons (SMIGS) in London, UK, which became the Association of Laparoscopic Surgeons of Great Britain & Ireland in 1990.

## 3. The vision and mission of CaSES

To ensure that this new Society in the Caribbean would be inclusive of all specialties it was agreed to name it 'The Caribbean Society of Endoscopic Surgeons (CaSES)'.

A mission statement was formed "To promote safe endoscopic surgery across the Caribbean". It was agreed that full members must be practicing endoscopic surgeons who would have to be proposed and seconded. Prior to acceptance, their application must be vetted by their country's council member. It was also agreed to hold the inaugural meeting at the end of the year which Professor Dan agreed to host in Trinidad. Discussion took place about having future meetings in tandem with the Caribbean College of Surgeons.

The following positions were approved to form a Council- President (3 years), Vice President (3 years and to automatically take over as President), Hon. Secretary (5 years), Hon. Treasurer (5 years), Head of Training (3 years), Programme Secretary (5 years) and Members of Council to represent Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cayman, Curaçao/Aruba, Jamaica and St. Lucia. Past Presidents would remain on Council as long as they were still practicing.

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The following surgeons were elected for the posts as listed: President Professor Rosin, Vice President Dr. Fa Si Oen, Secretary Professor Cawich, Treasurer Dr. Maharaj, Head of Training Professor Dan and Programme Secretary Dr. Simpson and the following Council Members:

- Bahamas-Dr. Francis.
- Barbados-Dr. Griffith.
- Belize-Dr. Burgess.
- Cayman-Dr. Sanji.
- Curaçao/Aruba-Dr. Ponson.
- Jamaica-Professor Plummer.
- St. Lucia-Dr. Greenidge.
- Trinidad-Dr. Singh.

At the initial meeting the primary points goals for CaSES were formed:

- a) the need for a voice to overtake opposition to the introduction of laparoscopic surgery in the region
- b) the need for a common vision for the common good
- c) the need for co-ordination and regulation
- d) the need for a lobby on behalf of our patients for quality
- e) to be pro-active in safe surgery
- f) to become more standardized as a Caribbean region with it's own regional benchmarks
- g) the need for a mature recognized group that the outside world can recognize
- h) to have a unified approach to industry
- i) the necessity of having a recognized body for regulation, training, mentoring and audit.

Following discussion of these several points it was agreed that the primary roles that CaSES must undertake were.

- 1) Regulation
- 2) Audit
- 3) Mentoring
- 4) Training and possibly
- 5) Centralization for either/or patients and surgeons for those procedures done in small numbers.

#### 4. Annual meetings

The hallmark activity of the CaSES over the years has been the annual meeting.

The inaugural annual meeting was held in November 2013 in Trinidad and was a huge success thanks to the sterling work by Professor Dan and his team. Many overseas leaders in endoscopic surgery participated. These included Dr. Erik Totte (Belgium), Dr. Gerrit Slooter (The Netherlands), Professor Michael Parker (UK), Professor Timothy Rockall (UK), Professor Jorge Rabazza (USA), Dr. Michael Kluger(USA) and Professor Christopher Eden (UK). All were made Hon. Members at the General Meeting. Professor Parker had had a President's medal made in the UK and he together with Drs. Slooter and Totte presented it to the Society.

In 2014 Dr. Fa Si Oen hosted the second meeting in Curacao, this built on the already set platform of presentation of regional series, presentations by important international quality leaders such as dr. Patricia Turner, Dr. Jorge Rabazza, and Dr Erik Totte and the live operations platform in which bariatric and laparoscopic colorectal procedures were performed with live video streaming from the St. Elisabeth hospital. In addition the spectrum of gynecological, minimal invasive radiological procedures and resident presentations were added. The dinner ceremony was hosted by the then Minister of Health Mr. Stanley Palm. This meeting further cemented the CaSES as a recognized regional representing body for quality and advocacy in endoscopic surgery.

The third annual meeting was held in Barbados hosted by the President, Professor Rosin. The meeting was held in conjunction with the Caribbean Obesity Society at the Accra Beach Hotel & Queen Elizabeth Hospital for the live surgery. At the opening ceremony an address was given by The Hon. Dr. John Boyce, Minister of Health.

There was a large International Faculty who helped with a pre-conference training workshop, led by Mr. James Ansell from the Welsh Institute for Minimal Access Therapy (WIMAT). Others on the faculty were Dr. Arena (Hon. Member from Canada), Professor Bailey (UK & France), Professor Eden (Hon. Member from UK), Dr. Gerald Fried (Canada), Dr. Michael Kluger (Hon. Member from USA), Prof Pantan (Canada), Dr. Marks (USA), Professor Rabaza (Hon. Member from USA), Professor Rockall (Hon. Member from UK), Professor Shukla USA), Dr. Slooter (Hon. Member from the Netherlands), Dr. Totte (Hon. Member from Belgium), Dr. Turner (USA) and Dr. Urbach(Canada). On the first day colonic/rectal and hernia operations were performed by Professor Rockall & Dr. Totte.

During the second day topics included Training, Upper GI surgery, Colonic surgery, Endoscopy, Urology & Gynaecology.

Two presentations on 'A look into the future' were given at the end of the conference by Professors Bailey & Rabaza.

At the Banquet Dr. Ramesh Jonnalaggada, President of the Caribbean College of Surgeons was made an Honouree and the following made Hon. Members- Professors Bailey & Shukla, & Drs. Turner, Marks & Arena. On the final evening an International Faculty & Council Dinner was held at Lancaster Great House.

In 2016 the 4th Annual meeting was held in Nassau, Bahamas, hosted by Dr. Wesley Francis. Live surgery was performed at St. Margarets Hospital. Dr. Gerald Fried was made a Hon. Member.

In 2017 CaSES had a consecutive/joint meeting with the Caribbean College of Surgeons at the Hilton Rose Hall Resort, Montego Bay, Jamaica. As in previous years there was live surgery during the CaSES meeting, which included a colectomy by Lindbergh Simpson and a nephrectomy by Roy McGreggor.

Topic Sessions included Urology, Hernia repairs, Hepato-Pancreatic-Biliary surgery Gynaecology and Residents' presentations. During the Caribbean College meeting which followed, Professor Bill Heald gave the distinguished guest lecture on the management of rectal cancer. Dr. Donker also delivered a lecture on Robotic Surgery.

The 2018 Annual Meeting was back in Trinidad but on this occasion the meeting was held at the San Fernando Hospital, hosted by Professor Dan, Vice President. The theme of the meeting was Extra-Abdominal Endoscopic Surgery.

Unfortunately, due to hurricane Florence, Dr. John Marks could not get out of Philadelphia so Dr. Yardish Singh performed an anterior resection whilst Professor David Terris from Georgia, USA, performed minimal access thyroid & parathyroid operations.

#### 5. Additional and future developments

CaSES developed an outreach program in which it assisted in education and systematic introduction and teaching of advanced procedures and techniques with regional experts in specific regions. Examples are the outreach sessions in St. Lucia and Kingston, Jamaica and the introduction of laparoscopic hepatic surgery in Trinidad by Prof. Cawich.

With these outreach programs the whole setting and regional team is taught specific procedures and given advice how to set up specific durable programmes and techniques which will ensure the safe introduction of techniques.

In 2015 and 2017, through the CaSES platform electronic regional surveys were taken by Dr. Kluger and Dr. Fa Si Oen.

These surveys will give an initial feedback information stream on regional surgery output data and safety procedures.

In the future, by expanding on this data platform, CaSES will have real-time feedback data, which will help in creating useful regional

policy. In 2017 a CaSES website was introduced which will serve as a member driven central hub to intercommunicate and inform on future events, have forum discussions and help create the regional quality environment.

## 6. Summary

Most of the roles that the Society thought were important at its conception have been achieved.

CaSES has developed and come a long way in five short years. Training courses have been arranged in Barbados, Curacao, Jamaica, St. Lucia & Trinidad.

Mentoring has taken place throughout the region and the overall combination of our meetings and activities was successful in many ways and CaSES has been established as the regional quality entity for endoscopic surgery.

We have also encountered the usual challenges.

Regional logistics and dynamics pose a permanent challenge, Infrastructure and transportation is different from the continent and hosting an annual event next to a busy international meeting schedule is no easy feat.

A separate challenge is keeping funding and industry interest stable as regional financial burden is readily felt in this area.

Also access to stable membership income through digital means is a vital issue with Caribbean banking regulations.

Nevertheless these issues are challenges only to be resolved.

In terms of the primary concept and goals of CaSES, work still needs to be done on regulation and membership.

## 7. Conclusion

We believe the Society has a great future and that it will play an important role in bringing all the specialties that practice Endoscopic Surgery together. We hope that more countries in the Caribbean will join us and that all our patients will benefit. As in most resource-poor countries, the cost of Minimally Invasive Surgery has held us back, but when Governments learn of the benefits, hopefully this will change.

Our meetings have been very successful and all who read this article are welcome to the next meeting to be held in St. Lucia in October 2019.

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Dr.Patrick Fa Si Oen: Writing.

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## Guarantor

Dr.Patrick Fa Si Oen.

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None.

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