

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Report of a visit to the

Saba University  
School of Medicine

February 13-18, 2005

And

Rochester General Hospital  
Rochester, NY

June 27, 2005

## INTRODUCTION

The objective of the site visit was to re-evaluate the preclinical component of the program of medical education of Saba University School of Medicine that takes place on Saba, NA and the clinical component of the University's program of medical education that takes place in New York State. The major purpose of the visit to the campus on Saba was to assess that part of the University's program of medical education, primarily the basic medical sciences, which prepare students for clinical training. The purpose of the visit to Rochester General Hospital in Rochester, NY was to assess the clinical training offered to medical students and to meet with hospital staff directly responsible for monitoring and supervising clinical training that takes place at Rochester General Hospital

The Team

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### Activities of the Team During the Evaluation

The team members reviewed individually all of the materials provided by the University prior to and during the visit. These included the Data Base Document, the appendices to it, and various informational handouts distributed during the site visit, student and faculty records, and curricular materials that were available on the island of Saba and at Rochester General Hospital (RGH). The team reviewed the academic facilities on Saba and hospital facilities in New York State. The team members also interviewed administrative officers, faculty members, support staff, and students on Saba and at Rochester General Hospital in New York State. On the basis of these activities, the following observations related to appropriate sections of the Guidelines for the Evaluation of Medical Programs are presented with the respect to the program of medical education offered by Saba University School of Medicine.

## Forward

Saba University School of Medicine began in 1986 as an initiative conceived by Government of Saba. In June 1986, members of the Saba Government consisting of the Lt. Governor Wycliff Smith and Commissioners of Health and Education, Mr. Thomas Eric Johnson and Mr. Steve Hassell, met with Dr. David Fredrick, a medical educator from the United States, to begin discussions on establishing a medical school in the Netherlands-Antilles. The Netherlands-Antilles is a group of six islands located in the Dutch West Indies that belong to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Prior to this time, no other medical school had been developed in the Netherlands-Antilles.

The Saba Government also considered the potential negative consequences that might result from increasing the population by perhaps 20% over a five-year period. Considerable preparation went into the way in which Saba University would recruit and accept students and maintain a constructive working relationship with the government and local citizens. It was determined at the founding of the University, that Saba University would maintain a small student enrollment and not overload the infrastructure of the island.

Development of the medical school curriculum, policies and procedures occurred over a two-year period from 1986 to 1988, when a proposal was submitted to the Federal Government of the Netherlands-Antilles in Curacao for approval. Part of the review process by the Federal Department of Education included a series of meetings and a committee appointed by the Governor General, the Honorable H. Saleh. The committee submitted their final recommendation on March 21, 1989, that Saba University School of Medicine be listed with the World Health Organization (WHO). This recommendation was forwarded to Holland for further evaluation and approval. Between 1989 and 1992, officials from Holland held several meetings, and final approval for the medical school was granted in 1992. On October 29, 1992, a charter was granted by the Government of Saba for the establishment of the Saba School of Medicine as a non-profit foundation in the Netherlands-Antilles. In 1992, the Saba School of Medicine Foundation created a four member Board of Trustees responsible for financial oversight and the overall administration and direction of the medical school. Between 1992 and 1999, the number of members on the Board of Trustees increased from four to eight, including representation from the Saba Government, international medical education, and the Saba community at large.

The first group of 20 medical students matriculated in September 1993. The initial five-year goal was to admit 20 students per semester, with a maximum enrollment of 100 students in the basic sciences on Saba, followed by an equal number of 100 students in the clinical medicine program. By 1997, the five-year goals established at the inception of the medical school had been achieved. In June 2000, Saba University graduated 86 students and placed 98% in residencies throughout the United States. Presently, Saba University has a total enrollment of approximately 400 students.

An impact study was conducted on Saba University School of Medicine for the government of the island of Saba. Although the study was conducted using financial and demographic information through 1998, the results were extremely positive. According to the

report, in 1998 Saba University contributed nearly 20% of the entire Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to the Saba economy with the prediction that the contribution to the GDP would increase to 50% with the future growth of the school. Benefits to the islands overall education, health care, and social structure were also cited

### Stated Goals and Objectives

Saba University School of Medicine provides a basic science and clinical medicine education program that produces physicians who meet health care needs in the Netherlands-Antilles and other countries. This mission is being accomplished by collectively defining the latest medical science strategies for the treatment and management of patients in a broad range of social and economic settings. Saba students are prepared to demonstrate the professional and clinical skills needed for medical problem solving, health promotion, patient care, community services, and research and scholarship.

### Goals

- To prepare medical students for the study and practice of medicine through the motto of Saba University, "Education For Life." Saba University focuses on the expectation of the physician to engage in continual study and the development of professional skills;
- To serve the island population of Saba as well as the greater Netherlands-Antilles populations through improvement in local health care delivery, the provision of expert medical consultation, and the donation of equipment and supplies to local health care facilities. The medical school will interact with local agencies such as Red Cross, Hurricane Emergency Committee, Visiting Home Care Nurse, and the Saba Marine Park; and
- To promote research through epidemiological and scientific investigative projects that benefit the island of Saba as well as the regional population. Such research would provide a database for the identification of prevention of health related problems. The medical school has the additional goal of participating in health education projects for the A.M. Edward Hospital staff, the Red Cross and the local public schools. The medical school will participate directly with the Saba Marine Park and Hyperbaric Facility in the implementation of regionally related research projects.

### Objectives

- Provide a foundation in the sciences, basic to the study of medicine;
- Integrate the basic sciences with the clinical sciences;
- Provide exposure to the clinical skills, procedures and knowledge that are fundamental to medical practice;

- Progressively acquire and extend scientific philosophy concepts and techniques to the practice of medicine;
- Understand how patient deviation from proper health, needs to be recognized, appropriately managed and cared;
- Use computer technology to update information and to use information technology for evidence based medicine purposes that result in making effective medical decisions;
- Ensure an awareness of the psychosocial and economic-legal context in which the practice of efficient medicine occurs; and
- Oversee planning committees and faculty workshops that complement the medical education mission.

The University has stated in the documentation submitted in preparation for the site visit that it continues to adhere to its stated educational mission. The Basic Science curriculum includes the didactic courses generally taken by students in U.S. medical schools and is supplemented by courses that facilitate the transition to Clinical Medicine. Physical Diagnosis and Introduction to Clinical Medicine are coordinated by organ system and disease process. A review course is offered in preparation for USMLE Step I, and the examination format in the basic sciences courses has been converted to a computer-based modality to further familiarize students with the examination format they will encounter in the future. Mock USMLE-type exam scores are analyzed in an attempt to counsel students on their readiness to sit for the USMLE. As a valid outcome measure, first-time pass rates for the USMLE Step I have been monitored and indicate an improved rate over 2002 to 2003.