



## PRESS RELEASE

June 16, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### Mandeville Hospital Performs First Scar-Free Vaginal Surgery in Jamaica

The Mandeville Regional Hospital (MRH) in Manchester has achieved another major milestone in healthcare; this time, becoming the first hospital in Jamaica to perform a scar-free minimally invasive vaginal surgery, known as Vaginal Natural Orifice Transluminal Endoscopic Surgery (vNOTES).

This advanced procedure allows surgeons to perform operations through the vaginal canal using specialised instruments and a camera, eliminating the need for external abdominal incisions and visible scarring.

The breakthrough was made possible during a three-day surgical mission, held from June 9 to 11, 2026, where local doctors partnered with specialist surgeons from the Jamaica Awareness Association of California (JAAC), for the annual mission, which has been strengthening Jamaica's capacity in advanced laparoscopic and endoscopic surgeries.

Senior Resident in the Department of Surgery at MRH, Dr. Ashok Kotagiri explained that the teams completed approximately 21 advanced procedures during the mission.

"These included advanced laparoscopic hernia repairs using techniques such as Transabdominal Preperitoneal, Totally Extraperitoneal and Intraperitoneal Onlay Mesh, laparoscopic gallbladder removal, and advanced laparoscopic gynaecological procedures, including hysterectomies, bilateral salpingectomies and ovarian cyst surgeries using the vNOTES approach" Dr. Kotagiri added.

He added that these surgeries performed during the mission require a higher level of surgical expertise than those usually performed.

"The type of surgeries we are doing, they are not the simple everyday surgeries. These are advanced surgeries. I am glad that our  
(more)

**Chairman:** Michael Stern; **Vice Chairman:** Simone Scarlett, **Board Members:** Wayne Chen, Lorraine Green Mason, Marcus Greenwood, Winston Maragh, Dr. Lloyd Reynolds, Omar Miller, Denise Edwards, Sherill Morgan, **Permanent Secretary's Nominee:** Howard Lynch, **Regional Director and Secretary:** Michael Bent; **Regional Technical Director:** Dr. Vitillius Holder; **CEO, Mandeville Regional Hospital:** Alwyn Miller; **SMO, Mandeville Regional Hospital:** Dr. Everton McIntosh

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gynaecologists at MRH are the first team to perform this advanced surgery in Jamaica. Even in the USA and Europe, not all gynaecologists have the skills to perform this advanced laparoscopic gynaecological surgery," Dr. Kotagiri said.

For Associate Professor of Surgery at the University of Southern California and volunteer physician with JAAC, Dr. Sharon Shiraga, the mission extends beyond patient care and focuses heavily on training local teams.

"We're here at Mandeville Hospital helping the residents and doctors to enhance their laparoscopy surgery by doing hernia surgeries, gallbladder surgeries and any other advanced surgeries of laparoscopy they would like to have," Dr. Shiraga said.

Dr. Shiraga also highlighted the value of hands-on mentorship during the mission.

"One of the patients that we've just finished here, we had a junior resident perform the surgery very successfully. So, I think it's very nice to have a team participate and kind of gain more confidence in the ability to perform laparoscopic surgeries," she said.

In the meantime, Senior Resident in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the MRH, Dr. Toshikah Wheatley-Williams, also hailed the successful implementation of vNOTES as a ground-breaking development for patient care.

"This is going to be a game changer for our patients. Of course, it's minimally invasive and so we have the advantages of that as well. Women will be able to go back to their day-to-day activities in no time," she added.

In addition to sharing their expertise, the JAAC team donated laparoscopic and other surgical supplies valued at an estimated J\$5 million. The supplies will support patient care at the hospital, particularly for individuals who may be unable to afford the specialized items required for advanced procedures.

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Picture 1



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**Dr. Alexis Peters (left), Resident at Southern California, and Associate Professor of Surgery at the University of Southern California, Dr. Sharon Shiraga (right), guide Junior Resident at the MRH, Dr. Keem McLaughlin (centre), during a laparoscopic procedure at the hospital June 10, 2026.**

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Picture 2

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**Medical professionals observe the first VNOTES (Vaginal Natural Orifice Transluminal Endoscopic Surgery) procedure in Jamaica at Mandeville Regional Hospital on June 10, 2026.**

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