

B/N Ali, Amza (Dr.)

J'can gets prestigious award in field of epilepsy

CONTRIBUTED

Dr Amza Ali, founder and president of the Jamaican League Against Epilepsy and medical director of the Epilepsy Centre of Jamaica, shows off the award presented to him by the American Academy of Neurology. He has been recognised for his work in the field of epilepsy in Jamaica and the English-speaking Caribbean.



DR AMZA Ali, founder and president of the Jamaican League Against Epilepsy and medical director of the Epilepsy Centre of Jamaica, has been recognised by the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) for his work in the field of epilepsy in Jamaica and the English-speaking Caribbean.

The award, received by Ali at the 2009 Palatucci Advocacy Leadership Forum held recently in California, has positioned Jamaica as the only country in the region to have obtained such prestigious recognition from the AAN.

The annual award, which is in its seventh year, was created by the AAN in honour of Donald M. Palatucci, a visionary neurologist

in San Francisco, California, who understood that enduring change required a commitment to effective advocacy.

Over the years, some of the most well-known neurologists, from developed countries such as the United States, have received the award.

SPECIALITY DEVELOPMENT

“I have been working in the field for several years. That the AAN has seen it fit to recognise my work and my future plans for advancing epilepsy care in the Caribbean is humbling and a great honour,” Ali said.

Speaking heartily about where it all began, Ali recollected that on his return from study in 1992, the majority of patients in the neurology clinics of the public hospitals

were patients with intractable epilepsy. It was this situation that inspired him to leave Jamaica in 2000, sponsored by the Jamaican Government, to train in epilepsy at the Columbia University, New York.

“It was there in New York that I learnt to systematically evaluate and treat persons with epilepsy, including assessing their suitability for surgery, an option we plan to make available in Jamaica and the English-speaking Caribbean soon,” Ali said.

Unable to resist the natural inclination to educate, he explained that “epilepsy is not a psychiatric disorder, or due to demonic possession. The disorder can be controlled in most

patients and is even curable in some”.

SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT

Ali said that even patients with apparently intractable epilepsy can become well controlled and, if required, careful evaluation can identify those who are suitable candidates for surgery, an option that can bring significant improvement in their condition.

Ali was trained in neurology at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in London. He is a senior consultant neurologist to Kingston Public Hospital and the South East Regional Health Authority, as well as an associate lecturer in neurology at the University Hospital of the West Indies, Mona.