The Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) Pan-Caribbean Group

Global Engineering Debate 2017

The UTT Biomedical Engineering Conference 2017 was held on Friday 19th May, 2017 in Theatre 1, NAPA POS capturing the theme ‘The Applications of Biomedical Engineering in the Management of Healthcare.’ Within this conference, the Global Engineering Debate (GED) 2017 was hosted and the topic of discussion was “Should the technology and engineering healthcare for older persons in Trinidad and Tobago be funded by Government, by Private Health Institutions or by Public-Private partnerships?”

The panelists for this debate included Mr. Dale Persad, Ms. Samantha Deoraj and Mr. Ezekiel Yorke. Mr. Dale Persad is an Electrical Engineer at ABB and supported Private Health Institutions. Ms. Samantha Deoraj is an Engineer within Microsoft SMB Team and supported Public-Private partnerships and Mr. Ezekiel Yorke is currently pursuing an M.Sc. Manufacturing Engineering and Management and was for Government funding.

Before the debate began, a voting card was passed out to members of the audience. They were required to tick the option who they thought should fund the technology and engineering healthcare for the elderly in Trinidad and
Mr. Persad began the debate highlighting his views on why the Private Health Institutions should ‘capture’ the cost associated with technology and engineering healthcare for the elderly in Trinidad and Tobago. He spoke about the need for diversification of the economy from oil and gas. Wearable technology is an open market and is estimated to be worth $34 billion by 2020 making it very profitable.

Ms. Deoraj followed with her views on why the responsibility should be shared between Public and Private sectors. The Government invested $6.25 billion into health care in 2017 yet there is still room for improvement thus, the intervention of the Private sector is necessary. There is a huge market for wearable technologies and could be tapped into by the private sector. She suggested that members involved in academia needs motivation and financial support from the private sector to bring their innovative ideas to life.

Finally, Mr. Yorke closed the debate with his discussion on why the Government should take responsibility for funding technology and engineering healthcare for older persons. Private healthcare in Trinidad is too expensive therefore making it less accessible to most elderly persons given that their old age pension is TT$3500.00 per month. According
to a survey done by Ezekiel, it was found that majority preferred that the Government funds healthcare due to the fact that it is free and thus easily accessible to them.

After the panelists completed giving their views, a second polling card was distributed to the audience to vote again given the new information received from the debate. The results for the debate is as follows:

Before the debate, the majority of the audience preferred the Public-Private Partnership. Mr. Yorke successfully convinced the audience that the Government should fund technology and engineering health care for the elderly as his support increased significantly from 26%-48%, almost capturing the lead.
