

Tribute

to

**Dr. Suzan
McLennon-Miguel**



The Caribbean veterinary community mourns the loss of Jamaican veterinarian, Dr. Suzan McLennon-Miguel, affectionately known as Doc Sue. She passed away in Suriname on July 8, 2023 at the age of 55 following a battle with cancer. She is survived by her husband David Miguel, a native of Trinidad and Tobago.

Suzan started her career in 1989 as an Animal Health Assistant in the Veterinary Services Division of the Ministry of Agriculture of Jamaica. She went on to study at the UWI School of Veterinary Medicine in Trinidad, graduating as a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 2002. She later completed her Masters in Public Health at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. She served as Senior Veterinary Specialist in the Veterinary Services Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining of Jamaica from 1989 to 2021.

In recognition of her outstanding work in the Veterinary Services Division, Dr. Miguel was awarded the title of Civil Servant of the Year in 2011 by the Jamaica Civil Service Association. Each year, the reigning Civil Servant of the Year is required to conceptualise and implement a project that should have a positive impact on society. Suzan's project was to establish "Happy Rooms" in children's hospital wards to help sick children recover through play and learning. Through Suzan's hard work, fundraising and determination, "Doc Sue's Happy Rooms" were created in the children's wards of five public hospitals in north, south, east, west and central Jamaica. Suzan worked diligently for over a year to raise sufficient funds to carry out this ambitious project. She organised fundraising "Friday Frizzles" at her office and mobilised corporate sponsorship from many businesses in Jamaica and overseas. The happy rooms were equipped with audio visual equipment, toys, games, and instructional and artistic materials. In Suzan's words, her goal was "to create a future of happy kids, and with the Happy Room, children can start dreaming of what they want to be in the future... It's more than a playroom, it's a place where you can

share happy thoughts, play, learn new things, interact with each other, express anything and everything that has made you happy today.”¹

Suzan was a Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) certified trainer, and led several training workshops in Jamaica. She was a major force in the establishment of a regional disaster response network for animals, following the volcanic eruption in St. Vincent in 2021.

In April 2022 Dr. McLennon-Miguel was seconded to the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA), as the Food Safety Specialist, based in Suriname. In a global webinar entitled “Enhancing Food Safety Using a One Health Approach” in April 2022, Suzan expressed her commitment and enthusiasm for her new role by saying “CAHFSA is going to be a beacon for the region, we are going to be shining a light and bringing in all the ships that are coming with the tools and training so that we can strengthen our plant, animal and food safety systems.”

We have invited a few of Suzan’s friends and colleagues to pay tribute to Suzan by sharing personal stories.

Sandra Vokaty, former PAHO/WHO Advisor on Veterinary Public Health for the Caribbean (2012 to 2019), currently PAHO Consultant on Antimicrobial Resistance and Food Safety

When I worked with PAHO as Veterinary Public Health Advisor in the Caribbean, I had the joy and privilege of working with Suzan on antimicrobial resistance, food safety and zoonotic diseases. She always displayed an exuberant and infectious enthusiasm for the work. After technical workshops, Suzan would take the information back to Jamaica and make a focussed effort to implement the recommendations all the way to the field. She was one of the most motivated, determined and productive veterinarians that I have worked with. She saw challenges as opportunities and was absolutely brilliant at mobilising resources to implement projects.

In 2018, PAHO and FAO organised a joint workshop for Caribbean veterinarians on prudent use of antimicrobials in livestock in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. In the group photo below, Suzan is smiling broadly right behind me. But what amazed me was what happened after the workshop, back home in Jamaica.

World Antibiotic Awareness Week is always held in mid November. Suzan conducted a spectacular farmer and public awareness campaign all over Jamaica, with farmer meetings, radio call in shows, and media interviews. She approached the Jamaican private sector for sponsorship for many events. She had been very impressed with a Canadian veterinarian (Duane Landals) who had made presentations in the workshop in Trinidad. She immediately invited him to visit Jamaica and help with the AMR awareness campaign. And she found the resources for his travel, only a month later.

Suzan McLennon Miguel was a passionate leader in the Caribbean veterinary community. She was a great communicator. She had a big heart and she made things happen. Suzan made a difference in everything she undertook... she inspired us and is sincerely missed by all who knew her.

¹ The Jamaica Gleaner, January 19, 2013. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20130119/lead/lead4.html>



Doc Sue (2nd from bottom, holding the rail) at the PAHO/WHO and FAO Workshop for the Caribbean on Prudent Use of Antimicrobials in Livestock, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. October 23-24, 2018.

Dr. Paul Cadogan, Veterinarian, Jamaica

I have known Suzan “Doc Sue” McLennon-Miguel since she joined the Veterinary Services Division as an Animal Health Assistant in 1989. Her bright, cheerful nature and enthusiasm for her work always stood out. When she became a Veterinarian she became not only a colleague but a good friend. She and I would seek each other’s thoughts and advice on so many things. I’ll never forget her “HIIIIIIII!!” greeting on the phone. Her big smile, uplifting personality and sound counsel will remain with me. Her passionate contribution in the areas of food safety, public health and disaster



Above: Dr. Suzan McLennon-Miguel (standing in the background beside the screen) leading a moment of togetherness and laughter during the inaugural JVMA/CCFP-J One Health Conference in November 2018. Her husband David is standing on the right taking a photo.

preparedness, response and mitigation for our Caribbean animals will not be forgotten. She was truly a One Health veterinarian.

Sue knew how to make learning fun and could enliven the most serious conference or workshop gathering with moments of laughter and group participation while still underscoring the important concepts at hand.

Her devotion to her husband David was there for all to see and together they lived their faith. They both cared for their pets deeply, and saw to their care when they were forced to leave them when Sue was posted to Suriname. Her concern for the well-being of others – whether human or animal – was never-ending, as evidenced by the way she treated those who worked with her and the selfless way she lived her life. She was always ready to help, support, uplift, empathize with and celebrate others, no matter how busy she was.

I will always miss Doc Sue! She was one of a kind.

Sharna Frater, Animal Health Technician, Veterinary Services Division, Jamaica

Behind every good team, there is a great supervisor. Dr. Suzan McLennon-Miguel was indeed blessed with both interpersonal and management skills, a confident, supportive personality and was very approachable and marketable. She was a true educator to many persons in the Veterinary Services Division, agricultural institutions and other agencies in both the private and public sectors.

A very firm believer in collaborative work, she played her role exceptionally well with the industry players through continuous training and recommendations. She had the most beautiful smile during her food processing plant inspections which helped put people at ease and motivated them to implement any needed improvements. The industry players have all expressed how much they will miss her and that the standards she taught them helped them become what they are today.

She was my sponsor, coach, counselor and most all my confidante. My mother and daughter held her in the highest regard for the way she nurtured me and the kindness she showed to us all. Thanks to her I have grown immensely in knowledge and confidence. She practically wrote my resume for me over the 8 years.

I will never forget those journeys we took together throughout the length and breadth of Jamaica. My most memorable one was the day we saw a man beating a horse on the roadside. She pulled the vehicle over and lectured him about the Cruelty to Animals Act and the Five Freedoms of animal welfare! That will remain in my heart forever.



Suzan and Sharna

There is nothing I can say that will ever convey the amount of gratitude I have. I owe it all to her for showing me how to have the right attitude towards work and life. She was like my second mother. Her mentorship has meant so much to me and the memories we shared will remain in my heart forever and ever.

Georgette Thompson, Senior Veterinary Biochemical, Analyst, Veterinary Services Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining, Jamaica

There are not enough words to share with the world about this amazing stalwart and transformational leader, Dr. Suzan McLennon- Miguel. Doc Sue, as she was popularly called, was a sociable individual and a mother to many. Doc Sue was a mentor to colleagues, friends and even children, always encouraging them to be better versions of themselves.

As a veterinarian and public health specialist, Doc Sue reinforced techniques to guide veterinary practices via workshops, the most prominent being the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS). I was privileged to serve on many committees with Doc Sue as leader including the Veterinary Services Disaster Committee.

She played an instrumental role in the development of the draft Jamaica National Action Plan for Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and nominated me to serve as administrator from 2015 until her untimely death. Little did I know that she was preparing the way for my future work in AMR and beyond. She always motivated me for meeting work targets.

In the PAHO AMR workshop held in Trinidad in May 2023, I was tasked to deliver a presentation on Jamaica's AMR national action plan and experience. She reviewed my presentation to ensure the points were "spot on". During my presentation she was my cheerleader, having logged in to the meeting's virtual room.

She was caring. When I lost my mother, she never failed to call to inquire of my status, sharing motivational thoughts just for me and my family. She took care of the needs of the staff and the well-being of every individual. She demonstrated her resilience in times of adversity to show young professionals like myself, the value and benefits of being persistent, setting realistic goals and charting the way to get it done. She put a smile on many faces including mine. A pep talk here and an empowerment talk there was sufficient to keep me going every day. Not to mention those souvenirs I often received from her frequent travels.

Doc Sue was a big deal! This veterinary, food safety and project management extraordinaire deserved the medal of a heroine. She went above and beyond to ensure the best, not just on a personal level but more so on a social and professional level. The footprints of her outstanding work left on record are ones to be admired. Her tenacity to meet goals and shape lives was intentional. What more can I say, than to encourage myself and others to be intentional just like Dr. Suzan McLennon-Miguel.



Senior Veterinary Biochemical Analysts (Alvarez, Kerry-Ann, Errol, Georgette & Azra) having fun with Dr. Miguel

We Will Remember Her