



UKHSA, PAHO and CARPHA Collaborate to Strengthen Diabetes and NCD Care in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories



The Workshop provided a space for Health Leaders, Clinicians, and Technical Experts

Bridgetown, Barbados, 14 November 2025 (PAHO/WHO) - In most Caribbean countries, diabetes is one of the most pressing and fastest-growing health challenges. This is also true in the United Kingdom Overseas Territories (UKOTs): Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Montserrat, and Turks and Caicos Islands.

To strengthen diabetes and noncommunicable disease (NCD) care in these territories, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) through the Civil Resilience Fund, convened a regional workshop from November 3-7, in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization

(PAHO) and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA). The workshop provided a space for health leaders, clinicians, and technical experts from the six Caribbean UKOTs and guest Atlantic UKOT, St Helena, to strengthen their collective capacity to prevent, diagnose, and manage diabetes.

The NCD burden is driven by high levels of overweight and obesity, unhealthy food environments, physical inactivity, and ageing populations - factors that together translate into premature mortality, lost productivity, and increasing costs to health systems.

According to Piedad Huerta, PAHO Subregional Program Director a.i, these challenges compel us to strengthen primary health care, promote prevention, early detection, and quality diabetes management to the people who need it most.

“Primary care remains the most equitable, efficient, and sustainable path to better health outcomes. This workshop is timely and necessary and builds on our shared commitment to reducing the burden of NCDs and advancing resilient health systems through Initiatives such as HEARTS and the Better Care for NCD. Together, we must accelerate progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 3.4, which calls for a one-third reduction in premature mortality from NCDs by 2030,” Ms Huerta stressed.

PAHO/WHO Representative for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean countries, Dr Amalia Del Riego, defined the partnership as meaningful to tackle the problem of NCDs at various levels. “It is not a challenge that we can take individually by one agency. This week is one of critical importance because you are going to be undertaking a deep dive on the fundamentals of patient care and clinical pathways for diabetes... So while we continue doing everything else that needs to be done, prevention, addressing determinants of health, commercial determinants of health, the individual care is extremely important - strengthening primary care, strengthening the network of services, and the way in which the health workers provide quality, coordinated care, so that people who are affected and are at risk can be served in the way that they deserve”, Dr Del Riego noted.

The UKHSA was commended for championing collaborative approaches to chronic disease prevention as well as the ongoing technical engagement of CARPHA in supporting regional NCD programs and strengthening surveillance and laboratory capacities across the Caribbean.

“As part of our ongoing work to support the health, wellbeing and resilience of the Caribbean UK overseas territories, we are pleased to convene this workshop at a time where we are seeing significant increases in the prevalence of diabetes in the region. Through collaboration, shared technical expertise, and joint leadership, this workshop demonstrates

the commitment of the UKOTs, UKHSA and regional partners to address NCDs, including diabetes, together,” remarked Catherine Mbema, lead for the UKHSA delegation.

Felicia McLean, Chief Nursing Officer in the Cayman Islands, described the week-long session as impactful. "Bringing together participants from the Overseas Territories and other Small Island Developing States (SIDS) created a meaningful space for networking and collaboration - both for our current efforts and for future initiatives. I am leaving with valuable tools and knowledge that will support the development of an action plan for my island, she said.

Similarly, Dr. Naail Uthman, Senior Medical Officer of Bermuda, stated that the workshop provided direct access to regional expertise, practical tools, and models to accelerate improvements in diabetes prevention, care and system-wide planning. “It can strengthen evidence-based decision-making, close gaps in surveillance and medicines access, boost workforce skills, and produce a tailored, actionable diabetes plan for Bermuda,” Dr Uthman stated.

The UKOT representatives worked on developing action plans and committed to continuing the exchange and collaboration among them to build a cohesive response to diabetes and NCDs. St. Helena presented data showing that Small Island Developing States across the world share similar challenges and potential joint solutions.

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About the Pan American Health Organization: *The [Pan American Health Organization \(PAHO\)](#) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world’s oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.*

[The PAHO Subregional Program](#) is responsible for providing subregional technical cooperation and strengthening PAHO’s engagement with the Caribbean Subregional integration mechanisms, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and its various bodies and organs; and to build synergistic partnerships with the West Indies (UWI), among others. PAHO’s subregional technical cooperation specifically focuses on public health issues which would benefit from economies of scale and for which agreement on proposed collective responses and actions would produce a far greater impact rather than individual country responses. The Subregional Program also plays a role in coordinating among the different PAHO country offices.