

Tuesday May 9, 2023

## **WORKSHOP DESIGNED TO IMPROVE CARIBBEAN HEART HEALTH**



*Heart health will be the focus of the workshop being hosted from May 15th to 19th*

Regional Ministry of Health representatives and health managers will gather in St. Lucia for the first Caribbean HEARTS Initiative workshop signaling a strong commitment of 17 countries and territories to the implementation of WHO/PAHO flagship Initiative for improving cardiovascular health.

The workshop is entitled 'Improving CVD Clinical Management and NCD Surveillance in the Context of COVID-19 through HEARTS Implementation: Lessons Learned and Plan for Scale Up'.

The program for the week of May 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 is designed to present Ministry officials and health managers with a robust agenda that includes: Cardiovascular risk management training for St. Lucia's healthcare staff; improving clinical management in the context of COVID-19 through HEARTS implementation; and developing a monitoring framework for NCDs for improved monitoring and evaluation.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD), mainly ischemic heart disease (IHD) and stroke, causes more than two million deaths annually in the Americas (North, South and Central America, and the Caribbean). Hypertension, the main modifiable risk factor for CVD, affects more than one-third of adults in this region. And as countries recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an urgent need to continue to build competency to improve the prevention of CVD and the clinical management of persons with NCDs, especially hypertension and diabetes.

HEARTS is a global initiative and here in the Caribbean – which has very high hypertension rates - it is led by the Ministries of Health, with the technical cooperation of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) which seeks to integrate the initiative into existing health delivery services. HEARTS promotes the adoption of global best practices in the prevention and control of cardiovascular diseases. It also aims to facilitate better control of high blood pressure and promote secondary prevention with an emphasis on primary health care.

The workshop will be attended by over 55 participants, including HEARTS and surveillance focal points from the Ministries of Health, as well as PAHO facilitators and resource persons.

The objectives of the workshop are: to improve knowledge and demonstrate cardiovascular risk management; best practices shared for improved implementation in the Caribbean; an application plan for the hypertension control drivers; and a NCD monitoring framework developed to suit each country's situation.

The Caribbean's embrace of the HEARTS in the Americas Initiative has the potential for high impact in a relatively short period of time.

Countries with a longer track record implementing HEARTS, such as Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Guyana, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago, have already defined their *Hypertension Clinical Pathways*, a powerful evidence-based tool designed to both elevate and standardize the management of hypertension and cardiovascular risk.

In the Caribbean, HEARTS, which began in three countries, is now in 17 countries. Those countries are Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands (BVI), Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos Islands.

Finally, because heart health is everyone's business, on Thursday May 18<sup>th</sup>, a public webinar for all of the Americas (North, Central and South and the Caribbean) will be transmitted from St. Lucia to observe World Hypertension Day. The public is called upon to have their blood pressure measured, visit a health center and learn more on how one can take better control of one's health. Remember, your health is in your hands, take control. The public webinar can be viewed on [PAHO TV](#) on YouTube.

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