

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados Minister of Health Address 18th April 2008

ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DR. THE HONOURABLE DAVID ESTWICK, MINISTER OF HEALTH, NATIONAL INSURANCE AND SOCIAL SECURITY, ON THE OCCASION OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE HEART & STROKE FOUNDATION OF BARBADOS, ON FRIDAY, 18TH APRIL, 2008, AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE HEART & STROKE FOUNDATION OF BARBADOS, LADYMEADE GARDENS, JEMMOTTS LANE, ST. MICHAEL, AT 7:00PM

Dr. Joy St. John, Chief Medical Officer, Mr. Dru Symmonds, President of the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados, Dr. Stephen Moe (President Designate) Mr. Adrian Randall, Chief Executive Officer The Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados, Professor Trevor Hassell, Members of the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados, Members of the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to thank the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados for inviting me to address you this evening, on the occasion of this 2nd Annual General Meeting. In accepting the invitation, I am quite conscious of the fact that this meeting is taking place at a time when there is much momentum in Barbados, the wider Caribbean, indeed around the world, towards taking steps to tackle the difficult problem of chronic non-communicable diseases. Internationally, cardiovascular diseases are regarded as the most significant of these conditions. It is also well recognised that failure to address these problems at this time will carry tremendous consequences that can extend beyond current generations and delay the progress and development of our countries.

As a response to these challenges, government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society are being encouraged to take coordinated actions to reduce the disease burden associated with chronic non-communicable diseases. As key players in this process, I am therefore certain that the members of the Heart & Stroke Foundation recognise that this Annual General Meeting is a very important event which will help to shape the agenda of this organisation not only for the next year but also as it develops plans to take it into the future.

Within Barbados non-governmental organisations have been significant contributors to disease prevention and health promotion for many years. As our disease profile has shifted, NGOs have re-oriented their interests and expanded the scope of their activities. This is certainly the case with the Heart & Stroke Foundation, which over the years has moved to establish a more formal operational structure that enables more effective management of day-to-day activities and contributes towards the achievement of its goals and objectives.

I must therefore reiterate that the Ministry of Health is extremely conscious of fact that our NGOs are operating in a particularly challenging environment. During my short tenure as Minister I have had the opportunity to hear some of the concerns of several such organisations. My ministry is therefore giving priority to establishment of an NGO Desk. This will be a focal and coordinating point for the advancement of our NGOs. The immediate benefits of this structure will include the pooling of resources, the opportunity to forge stronger linkages within the sector, and enhanced opportunities in the area of legislation and policy development. It will also greatly aid the Ministry in maintaining its responsiveness, even as we strive towards the highest standards of health services delivery, while facing a dynamic and challenging social environment.

Our changing social landscape, is further evidenced by the fact that Barbados, and other countries in

the Caribbean region are greatly influenced by cultural shifts in developed countries. This unfortunately brings about lifestyle changes that promote heart disease. These risk factors are very well known to us, and include unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and the use of tobacco. Cardiovascular disease affects individuals during mid life, often at the peak of their careers. Early death or disability leads to disruption of family plans for the future, prevents parents from seeing their children grow to full independence and deprives the society of valuable human resource skills in the most productive years. I am sure that these effects have touched most of us in this room.

Here in Barbados it has been estimated that cardiovascular disease alone accounted for almost 1/3 of mortality among Barbadians and when linked to diabetes for almost 42% of total deaths and excess mortality. It is now well recognised that hypertension; diabetes and high cholesterol raise the risk of cardiovascular disease. It has been estimated that by age 50 years, the average Barbadian has a 50% chance of having hypertension, while the prevalence of diabetes in the over 40 age group is 17%. By age 50 years 15-20% of Barbadians have diabetes and by age 70 years, that figure increases to 25%. Ladies and Gentlemen, you can see from these startling statistics that cardiovascular diseases comprise a major portion of the chronic non-communicable disease burden in Barbados. Furthermore, as we well know, much of the burden associated with this disease is preventable or controllable.

In response, the Ministry of Health established the Cardiovascular Disease Task Force in 2006, in an effort to achieve quantum improvements in the health of the population of persons at risk of developing cardiovascular disease, through the design and adoption of a comprehensive health care strategy for cardiovascular disease. The Task Force was mandated to prepare evidenced based strategies for tackling cardiovascular disease, and that these should conform to the overall health policy.

Two principal outcomes emerging from the Task Force were, a cardiovascular disease health improvement strategy designed to improve the health experience and health status of those at risk for and those suffering from cardiovascular disease; and a comprehensive prioritised service framework approach to health service interventions and developments with a view to deliver health status improvement.

Among the recommendations was the call for the establishment of a cardiovascular event and stroke registry, as part of an overall registry system to provide for the continuous monitoring of the incidence and impact of cardiovascular disease. The registry, which has been established in collaboration with the University of the West Indies, and more specifically with the Chronic Disease Research Centre, will during the course of this financial year receive funding from the Ministry of Health to the tune of 457, 500 Barbados dollars. It is expected that the first reports from the registry will be available by June of this year. In addition support will also provide for capacity building in the area of research and evaluation and for the monitoring of the implementation of the cardiovascular disease strategy.

It is also planned that during this financial year 400 persons will be trained in basic cardiac life support, and that this will include the use of automated external defibrillators. This action will be taken in recognition of the fact that first responders and the general public, along with pre-hospital emergency transportation play a very integral role in the chain of survival for those experiencing acute cardiac and cerebrovascular events. Provision has also been made in this year's Estimates for the commissioning of a public access defibrillation programme involving the placement of 8 of these devices at hotels, ports of entry and other places where large numbers of persons gather. Prevention and advocacy will be addressed through the mounting of public education campaigns to encourage healthy diets and increased participation in physical activity and sports.

The Ministry of Health through its National Nutrition Centre is currently working with the Ministry of Education in developing guidelines for healthy and nutritious foods in primary and secondary schools in Barbados. To this end a survey will be conducted in selected schools, during the current academic term, in order to determine the meals provided and the existing food consumption patterns within the school environment. It is hoped that through this effort we will be able to influence our children towards the development of positive food habits which will extend into adulthood and translate into health gains for future generations.

I now turn my attention to the Barbados Strategic Plan for Health 2002-2012. This document emphasised the need for a multi-agency, inter-sectoral approach to the planning and implementation

of health policies and programmes. The European Development Fund also promoted this approach and demonstrated its commitment through the provision of Bds\$25 million to the Government of Barbados to support a sector wide health development programme. This focus on the wider health sector ushered in a shift in the relationship between the Ministry of Health and other actors in the sector, and paved the way for novel approaches to health services provision.

In this process, the Ministry of Health has embarked on a programme to purchase services from other agencies that are competent to deliver those services, while the Ministry undertakes a stewardship role. In this regard, to date the Ministry has entered into a Bds\$5.75 million service level agreement with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for the upgrading of cardiology and cardiac services. Recent reports indicate that at present the procurement of the physical equipment for the establishment of a modern angiographic suite is in progress and that by January 2009 the construction phase of this project should commence.

In concluding, it is perhaps most heartening to report that the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados, having entered into a service level agreement with the Ministry of Health, has, with a ceiling of 150,000 Barbados dollars per annum, undertaken the provision of cardiac rehabilitation services for up to 50 patients referred from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in any given year. This programme has established significant success to date. The reality is that the programme has facilitated an increasing number of clients since its inception, and that this trend is fully expected to continue during this present financial year. This may suggest that at some time in the near future we may very well need to review and perhaps even extend the parameters of this programme.

Once again I must extend congratulations to the Foundation for its sterling performance during the past term. To Mr. Dru Symmonds, the outgoing president I must commend you for exemplary leadership of the Foundation over the past 13 years, and for your foresight and dedication in taking this organisation forward. To Dr. Stephen Moe, the incoming president, I wish you continued success as you take up the mantle of leadership. I believe that it can be somewhat daunting to follow in the footsteps of excellence, but I am fully confident that under your leadership we will not only witness a continuation of the momentum that was established by your predecessor, but that by virtue of your newness we will see a renewal of thrust and of vigour that will carry the organisation to even greater heights. So with the assurance that the future of the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados is in safe hands; I look forward to our continued and productive partnership, as we forge ahead in creating the type of health care structures that will propel our country forward. I thank you.



*#3 RailwayView, Ladymeade Gardens
Jemmotts Lane, St. Michael, BB11156, Barbados WI*

Tel: (246) 437-3312 or 427-8031

Fax: (246) 430-9898

Email: enquiries@hsfbarbados.org

Patron: His Excellency Sir Clifford Husbands, CGMC, KA Governor General