

Television Address by the Chairman of the NCNCD on the occasion of World Health Day, 7th April, 2007

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Prof. Trevor Hassell.

Good evening. Today April 7th is recognized and celebrated throughout the World as World Health Day. This special day was established 58 years ago, and is sponsored by the World Health Organisation to "create awareness of a specific health theme to highlight a priority area of concern for the World Health Organisation". This year the theme of World Health Day is "Invest in Health, build a safer future". The recognition of World Health Day 2007 provides an opportunity for the National Chronic Non Communicable Diseases Commission, of which I am Chairman, to draw the attention of Barbadians to the importance of health and wellness as a major tool and instrument in national development. It is a tool that allows for a safer and enhanced quality of life in the future, for the linkage between health and economic development is well established, and the two are inextricably linked.

The group of chronic non communicable diseases includes hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, obesity and some cancers such as those of the breast, cervix and prostate gland. These diseases are the major source of unwellness, ill health and premature death in Barbados and account for the largest expenditure of the health budget with an estimated more than 70% of both the QEH and the drug service budgets. The onset of the chronic non communicable diseases may be delayed or prevented by the adoption of a lifestyle that includes regular physical activity, maintenance of ideal body weight, absence of exposure to tobacco smoke, appropriate balanced diet that is low in saturated fats, and a state of social, spiritual and mental well-being.

Recognizing that wellness initiatives represent the most cost effective method of financing long-term sustainable and affordable health care, the National Chronic Non Communicable Diseases Commission was recently established by the Government of Barbados to develop and promote well planned strategies for their prevention and management, with specific emphasis on an inter- sectoral and multidisciplinary approach. The Commission will be the focal point of activity drawing on the expertise and disciplines from all aspects of society.

As we in Barbados join with others throughout the world in celebrating World Health Day, and as we further celebrate the year 2007 as the National Year for the Promotion of Health and Wellness, the Chronic Non Communicable Diseases Commission is determined as mandated to place wellness on the national and personal agenda. We therefore seek the translation of knowledge into action at the

individual, community, and national level, and take this opportunity of World Health Day 2007 to encourage individual Barbadians to establish and follow a way of life that is wellness focused and based, with the realization that such a life is ultimately the most rewarding and enjoyable. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do. I thank you.