

HEALTH Record

Newborn Cash Grant Launched

“...an investment in
Guyana’s future.”

- President Ali

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Newborn cash grant an investment in Guyana's future - President Ali

Launches \$100k cash grant for every newborn; distributes birth certificates, care packages

The Government of Guyana, through the Ministry of Health, has officially launched its Newborn Cash Grant initiative, marking a significant step in supporting the nation's future welfare.

Scores of mothers, accompanied by their spouses, gathered recently at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre (ACCC) in Georgetown, Guyana to witness the launching of the initiative by His Excellency, President Dr Irfaan Ali.

Through this bold initiative, more than 2,000 newborns, born in Guyana to a Guyanese mother, will receive a \$100,000 cash grant, costing the Treasury \$1.3 billion annually. It will be provided retroactively to families with newborns born in January and February 2025.

The President, in his feature address, said the initiative represents more than just financial assistance – it is a commitment to the nation's children by investing in their welfare and wellbeing.

"Every child born in Guyana is not just a citizen. They are a vital thread in the fabric of our nation's story. They are a shared treasure, entrusted to our collective care. Yes, to our collective care. The pressure of a newborn should not be that of their parents, but this is a collective responsibility and a collective care that we must demonstrate as a nation and as a people," said Dr Ali.

To ensure smooth distribution in the future, President Ali said a system has been established whereby mothers will

receive the grant before leaving the hospital in which they give birth.

In cases where deliveries take place outside of a hospital, systems will be in place to ensure that the grant is received within a week of birth.

“The future of our children is something we must intentionally invest in. This cash grant is not a privilege, it is a right, and it is a right that every child in Guyana is entitled to,” said the President.

He added that the Government is investing in comprehensive support for mothers by developing new medical and pharmaceutical facilities. This includes equipping hospitals with advanced technology, specialised care and expert medical professionals.

A dedicated Paediatric and Maternal Hospital is being constructed and will provide holistic care throughout the motherhood journey, ensuring mothers receive the best possible support from pregnancy to childbirth and beyond.

“Years from now, when today’s newborns stand where we stand, let them say they believed in us. They believed in us before we could speak. They fought for us before we could walk. They gave us not just a gift, but a foundation,” he declared.

Recognizing that raising a child involves more than just financial support, Her Excellency First Lady Arya Ali also contributed to the initiative by providing additional care packages.

Another aspect of the launching ceremony was the distribution of 600 birth certificates to parents, as part of a collaboration between the Government and the General Register’s Office (GRO).

Minister of Human Services and Social Security, Honourable Dr Vindhya Persaud, in opening remarks, said this initiative forms part of the Government’s commitment to making life easier for Guyanese, etched in their manifesto.

She explained that the Government is making good on its promises through various strategies, including supporting school children, children living with disabilities and orphaned children.

Meanwhile, Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, highlighted that the Government’s investments to improve healthcare for mothers have led to a significant reduction in maternal deaths.

The Newborn Cash Grant initiative is among a suite of measures implemented by the Government since 2020.

It complements the \$100,000 National Cash Grant and the \$50,000 Because We Care Cash Grant given to parents of school-age children. Other initiatives include the Universal Health Voucher and the Eye Testing and Spectacles Voucher programmes that will ensure every child continues to receive support throughout their development.

US\$3.3M contract signed to advance implementation of E-Health records system

To facilitate the development of a comprehensive healthcare information network, the Ministry of Health executed a US\$3.3 million contract with RioMed Limited of the United Kingdom on Tuesday for the implementation of a national electronic health record system.

The contract was signed at the Ministry of Health’s boardroom during which it was noted that the contract seeks to develop and implement the E-Health records

system in an initial stage at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation and all its satellite clinics.

While the duration of the contract is set for 18 months, officials disclosed that a “big bang” approach is not being taken in this regard and as such, deliverables will be realised before the end of that time frame.

This is reportedly the first phase of the programme and upon completion, other phases are expected to be

embarked upon as the intention is to have the E-HR system cover all facilities across Guyana.

Delivering remarks during the signing ceremony, Minister of Health, Dr Frank Anthony, stated that significant work has been done to arrive at this point of signing the contract.

To this end, he highlighted the establishment and implementation of legislation to cater for moving towards the use of technology and ensure data security.

One such piece of legislation passed by the parliament and enacted was the Data Protection Act which is aimed at preventing the misuse and theft of data and further the protection of the personal data of Guyanese.

“Now that you’re putting people’s data in this electronic format, people can try to breach the system and if there’s a breach, we want to make sure that when we catch you that there will be a suitable punishment,” he said.

Against this backdrop, he disclosed that if an individual is to breach information, the minimum fine starts at \$20 million Guyana dollars, while if a corporate entity is involved, the starting fine is \$100 million.

“So that’s how serious we are about people’s data confidentiality that we wanted to make sure that its quite high and we hope that that would be a deterrent to people,” he added.

Speaking of what the intention is for the long run, Minister Anthony stated that the intention is for citizens to have a unique identifier and when they enter the public health system they can use same to access their health records and thus reduce waiting times at public health institutions.

Dr Anthony added, *“We want to get to a point in the future where you would use your smart app on your phone and you’ll be able to make an appointment to come in and see your doctor and when you get there, you use your phone, swipe it and your records are there and as you are seeing all of that would be in the system.”*



Meanwhile, Chief Executive Officer Robbie Rambarran of the GPHC, where this phase will be rolled out, stated that the signing signifies more than just a business agreement but also represents the government’s commitment to embracing technological advancements.

Rambarran added that the implementation of this E-HR system will enable the hospital to transition from a traditional paper-based process to a streamlined digital solution that empowers clinicians, improves spatial output and enhances the overall experience for everyone.

As it is currently, the GPHC, he said, has various clinics and specialties which have separate record systems and as such they recognise the importance and efficiency that this move will bring to operations.

The current system, he said, has its challenges, which sometimes result in polypharmacy, and repetition of diagnostic tests, among other things which he noted, further lengthens the time it takes to treat patients.

With the new E-HR Rambarran said that it will be integrated at all clinics and as such physicians will be able to see who are managing the patients across the clinics and as such there can be more communication and a better approach on a multidisciplinary level for managing the patients.

Also speaking at the signing was Managing director of RioMed Limited, Mario Mohammed, who indicated that the company’s main aim is to improve quality, safety and efficiency by which healthcare is delivered in Guyana.

The implementation of the system, he added, would ensure equitable access to health services across the country, and will give patients access to their records securely via their own devices.

Also present at the signing was IDB country representative, Lorena Solorzano Salazar with which the government is partnering with for the rollout of the programme, along with the British High Commissioner to Guyana, Jane Miller.

Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Health, Malcolm Watkins (seated at centre) and Managing Director of RioMed Limited (seated first from left) sign the contract in the presence of IDB’s Country Representative, Lorena Solorzano Salazar (Seated first from right), Minister of Health, Dr Frank Anthony (standing second from right) and British High Commissioner (first from right)

President breaks ground for modern \$831.1M Campbellville Polyclinic



The sod has been turned for the \$831 million Campbellville Polyclinic, Georgetown.

Residents of Campbellville and Kitty in Georgetown, as well as many others in nearby communities, are set to benefit from enhanced specialised medical care, following His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali's recent turning of the sod for the modern Campbellville Polyclinic.

The \$831 million project will see the integration of the Campbellville and Kitty facilities into a modern two-story state-of-the-art facility.

President Ali, in his feature address, described the initiative as a leap forward, stating that as part of his government's vision, existing health clinics will be upgraded into polyclinics, offering better facilities and enhanced medical care.

He explained that, unlike traditional health clinics that provide basic outpatient services, polyclinics offer advanced diagnostics, speciality consultations and preventative care, easing the demand on public hospitals.

These clinics will be integrated via a national telemedicine platform supported by local and international health professionals, including India and the U.S. This will allow for early disease detection, timely intervention, improved patient outcomes and informed decision-making using data collected.

"Health care without data is like medicine without diagnosis – ineffective. With this polyclinic and others to follow, we will develop baseline health data that will help doctors make better, faster and more accurate diagnoses," said Dr Ali.

"That means communities that already have health clinics will soon see improvements. They will see better facilities, more specialised services, improved diagnostic capabilities and a greater capacity to care for their people," the President said. "This is not just a step forward. It is a giant leap."

This will be supported by the electronic medical record (EMR) system, implemented at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), which will streamline the development of baseline health data, allowing doctors to make faster and more accurate diagnoses.

Under the EMR project, a health app will be developed that allows patients to book appointments, receive e-prescriptions and manage their health records directly from their smartphones. The system, which is expected to be deployed at GPHC, will enable patients to access services within 10 minutes.

The President noted that this project is not merely the construction of a facility, but a commitment to providing

healthcare as a fundamental right. “By diagnosing illnesses early, the polyclinic will reduce the need for critical care and save money for families and the economy,” he said.

“What we are doing here today is more than just constructing a building. What we are doing today is making and fulfilling a promise. A promise to the people of Campbellville and Kitty and surrounding areas and



every citizen of this country. A promise that health care is a birthright,” the President said.

He said the facility will be staffed with highly skilled personnel, including doctors, nurses, specialists and technicians, who will be equipped to provide the highest standard of care to all patients.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, explained that one of the primary goals is to provide comprehensive services for children, including vaccinations, eye screenings, hearing tests and dental checkups, all accessible at the Campbellville Polyclinic.

“Not only are we giving you a modern facility, but we’re also providing a modern way of accessing healthcare. This is not a dream, it’s happening now,” Dr Anthony said.

Chief Executive Officer of the GPHC, Mr. Robbie Rambarran, commended the President for leading the modernisation of the healthcare sector for current and future generations.

Health ministry ramps up support for persons with hearing impairments

Launches support group for first-time hearing aid users.

Provides 4,091 persons with free hearing aids.



Members of the support group for first-time hearing aid users.

The continuing efforts by the Ministry of Health for persons with hearing disabilities has boosted the supply of health-related equipment and provision of health care for thousands of citizens, including children nationwide.

The range of initiatives includes screening for impairments in children, distribution of free hearing aids, and the development of disability screening equipment countrywide.

Some 4,091 persons have received free hearing aids since 2021, and over 20,000 nursery school children have received screening for hearing and other impairments in the past year.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, revealed these figures during a recent launching of yet another support initiative for the hearing-impaired. The Minister also officially opened the first session for a support group for first-time hearing aid users at the Ministry’s headquarters at Brickdam in Georgetown.

“When you look in the Caribbean region, we are one of the few countries that have a very structured hearing

programme. In many other countries, if you have a hearing challenge, then you have to go and get your hearing aid from people who are providing this in the private sector. In Guyana, it's different," he explained.

The Government's commitment to providing world-class medical services has also introduced modern equipment into the field.

Before Government intervention, persons requiring hearing aids would have to pay \$65,000 or more for battery-powered equipment. This caused significant financial strain and required large amounts of maintenance.

Persons can now access free rechargeable hearing aids, while the Ministry has upgraded screening equipment and trained scores of healthcare workers. Soundproof booths for hearing tests have been procured and placed

in several hospitals in Guyana. Four more booths will be placed in other medical institutions this year.

Minister Anthony said all of these efforts are geared toward providing a better quality of life for citizens of all ages, especially school-aged children.

"This is a problem that could affect everyone regardless of age. And for younger people, if it affects them, the challenge is that it can also affect how they learn. Because if they're sitting in a classroom and they're not hearing what is being said, it can be a problem for them to learn," he said.

The Ministry's school screening programme tackles this issue by testing children for various impairments and implementing necessary medical actions.

The elderly will also be catered for once the Ministry completes establishing its Gerontology Department.

Government announces five-year extension of the National Healthcare Initiative



His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali; Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony; Chief Executive Officer of Hess Corporation, Mr John Hess; Chair of Mount Sinai's Department of Global Health and Health System Design and Director of the Arnhold Institute for Global Health at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, Dr Rachel Vreeman, and other officials take time for a photo after the launch of the five-year extension of the National Healthcare Initiative.

His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali recently announced a five-year extension of the National Healthcare Initiative, aimed at transforming Guyana's public health system with world-class healthcare services accessible to every Guyanese citizen.

This next phase of the initiative, which was launched in 2022 by the Government, in collaboration with the U.S.-based Mount Sinai Health System and Hess Corporation (Guyana), will include establishment of a national cancer centre, continued modernisation of national health facilities, including Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), and the implementation of one of the world's most advanced digital health systems.

The initiative will continue to be funded jointly by the Government and Hess Corporation (Guyana), led by the Arnhold Institute for Global Health, the arm of the U.S.-based Mount Sinai Health System dedicated to advancing the institution's mission of delivering innovative, high-quality healthcare around the globe, and Mount Sinai International, the international venture arm of the Mount Sinai Health System.

The President was joined by Chair of Mount Sinai's Department of Global Health and Health System Design and Director of the Arnhold Institute for Global Health at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, Dr Rachel Vreeman, and Chief Executive Officer of Hess Corporation, Mr. John Hess, for a signing ceremony to establish the five-year extension of the national healthcare initiative.

"The journey to world-class healthcare is not walked alone. It is built through strategic partnerships, bold investments and a shared vision for excellence. Today, we take another decisive step toward transforming our healthcare system," President Ali said.

"By uniting the policy, expertise and resources of Hess Corporation, Mount Sinai and the Government, along with our local healthcare professionals, we are shaping a future where every citizen has access to cutting-edge, compassionate and high-quality care. Together, we are not just improving healthcare, we are redefining it," he added.

Mr. Hess stated that his company is proud to support the vision of the Government and the work of Mount Sinai to provide world class healthcare to every Guyanese citizen. "Access to affordable and high-quality healthcare is central to the country's future and its commitment to building shared prosperity for the people of Guyana," he said.

Dr Vreeman said her entire team is proud to work in partnership with the Government of Guyana to improve access to high-quality healthcare for all Guyanese. "Now, through 2030, we will continue to support and accelerate Guyana's progress to achieving a healthier country and a transformed health system, setting a new regional and global standard for modern health system development," she added.

Areas of focus to achieve a healthier Guyana by 2030

The next phase of the National Healthcare Initiative will be organised around the Government's vision for six key pillars:

- 1. World Class Cancer Care:** Establish a first-in-class national cancer centre to screen and treat breast, cervical, prostate and other common cancers that cause the most deaths in Guyana. The first phase of cancer services will expand much-needed access to cancer screening, diagnostic and treatment options; the second phase will offer advanced tertiary oncology services to the entire community in Guyana.
- 2. Women's and Children's Hospital:** Ensure Guyana's new National Women's and Children's Hospital meets international quality standards, is well-managed, and ready to provide high-quality

care for all of Guyana's women and children.

- 3. Community-Centred Care:** Complete the transformation of health systems across Guyana's regions to ensure everyone in Guyana, especially youth and vulnerable people, can receive health screenings, primary care treatment, and supportive services – creating a supportive health ecosystem across the country.
- 4. Quality Improvement:** Implement a national programme to improve the quality, safety, and delivery of health services – from the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), the country's largest hospital, to regional hospitals to every health centre and post. These initiatives will provide a strong foundation for the growth of a high-quality, modern health system that provides unparalleled care for all.
- 5. Digital Health:** Support the implementation of Guyana's first national electronic health records system and complete the foundations for one of the most advanced digital health systems in the

region and the world by 2030.

6. **Capacity Building:** Ensure critical health workforce needs are met by continuing capacity

building in health workforce development, resource planning, management, and financing.

Key accomplishments in first phase of National Healthcare Initiative

Since the launch of the National Healthcare Initiative in July 2022, significant progress is being made in improving health outcomes.

Key accomplishments include:

- Over 35,000 Guyanese children have had comprehensive health screenings completed by the Ministry of Health, with around a quarter referred on for needed services to address vision, hearing, dental, and developmental problems and more.
- Nearly 900 nursing assistants will graduate from the Ministry of Health's training programmes in

2025 and join the health workforce, beginning to close the nursing shortage.

- New guidelines and clinical protocols to grow primary care services for diseases like diabetes are launching nationally, across all of Guyana's regions.
- New digital protection laws are in place to support the rollout of new digital health systems, and a new Guyana digital health training institute will enroll its first class of digital health professionals early next year.
- A state-of-the-art pathology lab has reduced the time it takes for patients to be diagnosed and receive life-saving treatments.
- Quality improvements at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) have improved patient safety and are providing a new model for a national quality improvement programme.

MOH signs MOUs with 75 private health care agencies for roll out of voucher programmes

The Ministry of Health (MOH) recently signed three separate Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with several private health agencies to facilitate the rollout of the Government of Guyana's new Universal Health Vouchers, as well as the continuation of the existing Eye Testing and Spectacles and Cervical Cancer Screening Care Voucher programmes.

The signing took place in the Ministry's conference room by Permanent Secretary (PS) in the MOH, Mr. Malcolm Watkins, and representatives from the respective

agencies. The blueprint agreements, which strengthen the Government's commitment to expand healthcare access, ensure that citizens all across Guyana benefit from comprehensive medical services.

Through the Universal Health Vouchers, valued at \$10,000, children and adults nationwide will have access to a range of laboratory services, including complete blood film, lipid profile, renal function test, HbA1c (a blood test that is used to diagnose type two diabetes) and other essential tests.

Individuals under 18 years old and those 50 years and older will benefit from an Eye Testing Voucher, valued at \$2,000. If prescription eyewear is needed, they can also receive a Spectacles Voucher, valued at \$15,000, to cover the cost of their glasses.

Under the Cervical Cancer Screening Care and Voucher Programme, women between the ages of 21 and 45 will be eligible for vouchers valued at GY\$8,000 to undergo human papillomavirus (HPV) testing.



Permanent Secretary (PS) in the Ministry of Health (MOH), Mr Malcolm Watkins, signing the Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with service provider representatives.

Mr. Watkins highlighted the importance of collaboration between the Ministry and the private sector. He noted that this partnership is about more than profit and that it

is a shared social responsibility to help identify and treat illnesses early, thereby ensuring a healthy nation.

“The MOH recognised the importance of the strategic partnership with you (the private sector), and the role you will play to keep our nation healthy, and to be more preventative in identifying critical illnesses, potentially, before they get worse. And so, we understand that this partnership is not just about the profit, but it’s about the social responsibility that you have to the community in which you live,” he said.

The PS also encouraged stakeholders to focus on expanding services in remote areas, urging them to explore innovative ways to transport samples and expand screening services, and reaffirmed the Ministry’s commitment to supporting these efforts through medical outreaches and other initiatives.

Since the launch of the voucher programme in mid-last year, approximately 65,000 people have benefited from the Eye Testing and Spectacles Voucher Programme. Another 12,201 women have received support through the Cervical Cancer Screening Care Voucher Programme. With the continuation of these initiatives and the addition of the Universal Health Voucher, the Government of Guyana anticipates that over 500,000 citizens will benefit.

Among those attending the signing ceremony were Director of the Non-Communicable Diseases and Mental Health Programme, Dr Lachmie Lall; Hinterland Coordinator, Mr. Michael Gouveia; and representatives from various private sector agencies.

Gov’t to launch programme to provide prostate cancer screening

The Government of Guyana will soon launch a massive national initiative with one of its international partners, and Men on Mission (MoM) to screen males 45 years of age and older for prostate cancer across the country.

His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali recently made the disclosure during the launch of the Universal Healthcare Voucher, at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre at Liliendaal, Georgetown.

“Early detection gives you a better chance of having the best result. We are already working [on this]. We spent an entire day with the team from U.S.-based Northwell Health, working on a strategy that will address prostate, breast and colon cancer. We are going to map an early

detection, strategic approach towards national screening and treatment,” said Dr Ali.

In 2024, the Government conducted over 13,600 prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood tests across the country. Of this, 2,607 men had elevated PSA levels. In addition, 536 biopsies were performed, and 126 new prostate cancer cases were detected.

He added that almost 10,000 women are benefitting from cervical cancer screening, free of cost.

“We can really reduce deaths in [prostate cancer], breast cancer and cervical cancer because early detection is the key. All three of them we can reduce the deaths in an

extraordinary way with data, early detection and early treatment,” said the President.

Apart from building these partnerships, Dr Ali said the Government is also making substantial investments in cutting-edge medical technology and equipment for treatment. He applauded the private sector’s investment in healthcare aimed at enhancing service delivery.

“We have seen massive investment from the private sector in healthcare, improving their level of service and enhancing the environment in which they are delivering healthcare. We are continuing to facilitate that investment

so that our health ecosystem, public and private, can work seamlessly in delivering the best healthcare to our people,” said President Ali. “Guyana’s healthcare system will not only benefit the locals but also the Caribbean region.”

The President said the local healthcare system is meant to support within the region [and] to deliver global health services here in Guyana. “And that is why international connectivity and partnerships are so critical. We see Guyana as an attractive destination for global healthcare services. That is what we are building, a global market,” he said.

Strict adherence to patient data privacy for EHR system

Health Minister says confidentiality, privacy ‘built in’.



The upcoming Electronic Health Records (EHR) system will integrate vital health information, including patients’ medical histories, diagnoses, medications, treatments and test results.

An EHR is a comprehensive collection of a patient’s health history within a healthcare system. This comprehensive database will enable healthcare providers to make informed decisions regarding patient care, ultimately improving the overall healthcare experience for individuals utilising medical services throughout the country.

During a recent appearance on the Guyana Dialogue, Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, revealed that, when successfully implemented, private medical facilities will have access to patient’s electronic health records once authorised by individuals.

“We would have every person in Guyana getting a unique identifier and so the records can be shared, of

course with confidentiality and privacy being built in. But once the patient gives access, the doctor or the professional would be able to see that record,” he explained.

The Ministry of Health has contracted the U.K.-based company, RioMed Limited, at a cost of US\$3.3 million, to design, supply and install the electronic records system.

Phase one of the project will begin at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) and its satellite clinics. After successful implementation, the EHR system will extend to other health institutions across Guyana.

Legislation

The Government has already enacted the Data Protection Law, guaranteeing proper patient confidentiality.

Dr Anthony said that in a bid to prevent the leakage or exploitation of patients’ data, strict penalties will be given to persons who breach the outlined regulations.

“We passed legislation, and among the things that are in the legislation, are some very severe penalties. So, if someone leaks information from such a system they can be fined, and I think for [an] individual, [fines go] up to \$20 million, and corporate fines start at a \$100 million. So they’re really meant to deter people from such activities,” he noted.

In August 2023, the Data Protection (Amendment) Bill 2023 was passed in the National Assembly to protect the privacy of personal data. The Act contains stiff penalties for any breaches by data controllers, that is, the persons who determine the manner and purpose of which personal data is processed.

Additionally, it is a criminal offence for such officers to operate without being registered, or without nominating a representative, carrying a fine of \$10 million, or two months' imprisonment.

Like data controllers, data processors must also be registered and, when necessary, appoint a representative established in Guyana. A data processor is a natural or legal person, public authority, agency, or other body which processes personal data on behalf of the data controller.

When he presented the bill for its final reading in Parliament, Attorney General (AG) and Minister of Legal

Affairs, Honourable Anil Nandlall, noted that this piece of updated legislation had been long overdue, given the shift to e-governance and digitisation.

The Data Protection Bill was created to regulate the collection, keeping, processing, use and dissemination of personal data. It sets a statutory framework, moving away from the current system of the country's legislation, which does not safeguard against breaches to data protection.

Then, in 2024, the Government passed the Open Data Bill (No. 13 of 2024), which required that public authorities maintain an electronic data registry containing all data assets created, collected, under the control or direction of, or maintained by that public authority.

The Bill will complement the Data Protection Act and the Digital Identity Card Act, which were both passed the previous year.

Universal Healthcare Voucher a 40-70 percent discount on healthcare services - President Ali

Over 500,000 Guyanese to benefit from \$10,000 voucher

In a targeted approach to improving the nation's health and well-being, the Government officially launched the \$10,000 Universal Healthcare Voucher, enabling Guyanese to access critical medical tests to provide essential baseline health data.

These critical medical tests will allow medical professionals to detect various diseases, including diabetes, anemia, coronary heart disease, kidney disease, increased risk of prostate cancer, hyperlipidemia and uncontrolled cholesterol levels, among others.

This will lead to better treatment outcomes, reduced healthcare costs by preventing complications, and improved life expectancy.

The \$5 billion intervention will benefit over 500,000 individuals countrywide.

The groundbreaking initiative was recently launched by His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre at Liliendaal, Georgetown. The

President made it clear that top-notch healthcare services must be accessible, proactive and preventative.

Dr Ali emphasised that the Government is building a world-class healthcare system to deliver specialised medical services to every citizen, adding that the voucher will significantly offset medical costs for Guyanese.

"Once you have this voucher, it is not only about the \$10,000. It is about a 40 to 70 percent discount on the services that you will receive at the labs and hospitals. I want to applaud the private sector for their level of consciousness in supporting this initiative," said Dr Ali.

He said 80 percent of chronic diseases could be prevented if people lead better lifestyles and choices.

"Our healthcare is shifting from a treatment-based system to a preventative-based healthcare system, focusing on early detection, vaccination programmes, lifestyle choices and policy intervention. And that is what

this allows us to do. We can't do any of that if we don't have the data," he said.

The Government has partnered with 36 healthcare facilities to roll out the programme, ensuring that every citizen, regardless of geography, has access to high-quality medical screening. The voucher will be available at health centres, hospitals and medical outreaches, which can be utilised at 49 accredited public or private health institutions.

Special efforts are also being made for similar services to be more accessible to the hinterland regions and remote communities.

The President pointed to the investments that are being made in the six regional hospitals and the maternal and pediatric hospital to provide

specialised care. The Government, he said, has spent almost \$4 billion in specialised interventions to support the Guyanese.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, said his Ministry is placing a heavy focus on preventative care, ensuring that individuals can access the relevant tests to determine whether they are at risk for certain diseases.

Dr Anthony alluded to the series of medical interventions and investments that the Government is making in the health sector to bolster the quality of care being offered to Guyanese.

This significant screening initiative complements a wide menu of health services that are available in the public health system, free of cost.



His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali with a Universal Healthcare Voucher recipient.

Health Minister conducts walk-through of Enmore Regional Hospital construction site



Front view of the Enmore Regional Hospital, East Coast Demerara.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, recently conducted a site visit at the construction site of the Enmore Regional Hospital, East Coast Demerara.

The visit served as a follow-up assessment to evaluate the progress of ongoing works at the facility.

The construction of this hospital marks a significant step toward strengthening the country's healthcare infrastructure. Once completed, the hospital is expected to enhance medical services, providing improved

healthcare access to residents of Enmore and surrounding communities.

The new hospital will play a pivotal role in expanding regional healthcare capacity, ultimately improving patient care and overall community well-being.

The Ministry of Health remains dedicated to enhancing healthcare services nationwide and will continue to monitor the development of these projects to ensure they meet the highest standards.



Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony (centre), leading the walk-through at the Enmore Regional Hospital.

Child health programme data system boosted with donation of 20 tablets

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, recently accepted a donation of 20 tablets from the New York-based Mount Sinai Health System during a brief ceremony held at the Ministry of Health's Boardroom in Brickdam, Georgetown.

The tablets will be used by the Family and Primary Care Department's Child and Adolescent Units to support the Comprehensive Child School Screening Programme, enabling digital data capture for improved efficiency.

This donation follows Mount Sinai's Health Systems' successful installation of a REDCap server within the Ministry of Health. REDCap is a web application for building and managing online surveys and databases.

The agency is also facilitating comprehensive training for staff of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and other supporting agencies to ensure data integrity.

By transitioning to a digital system, this initiative will enhance the team's ability to review and analyse data in real time, supporting the development of data-driven policies, informed budget allocations, and timely interventions aimed at improving the health outcomes of children and adolescents across Guyana.

Among those present at the ceremony were Director of Primary Healthcare, Dr Ertenisa Hamilton; School Health Coordinator, Dr Farrah December; Executive Director of Guyana Consultancy Mount Sinai, Dr Rachel Vreeman; Country Director of Guyana Consultancy Mount Sinai, Mr Josué Alcántara; and other officials.

Launched in 2023, the Comprehensive School Health Programme is a nationwide initiative aimed at improving the health and well-being of school-aged children through systematic screenings. The programme assesses

children for vision, hearing, oral health, nutrition and other key health indicators, ensuring early intervention where necessary.

To date, the initiative has made significant progress with its screening programme, with 17,311 of 26,363 students screened at the Nursery Level and 19,554 of 85,382 students screened at the Primary Level.

The Ministry of Health remains committed to leveraging technology for better healthcare delivery and acknowledges Mount Sinai's continued support in strengthening Guyana's public health sector.



Mobile healthcare app to be rolled out – President

His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali has announced that a mobile app will soon be rolled out, which will allow citizens to schedule healthcare appointments and have medical reminders, among other things.

The President made the announcement during a signing ceremony held recently for the extension of the National Healthcare Initiative, a Government of Guyana programme which is being supported by Hess Corporation (Guyana) and the U.S.-based Mount Sinai Health System.

Dr Ali explained that the app will be introduced for the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) and all other regional hospitals.

“We’ll have the electronic mobile app, through which patients can schedule their appointments at these hospitals. Health updates will be on your mobile phone,

which will have medical reminders, such as for your medication,” he said.

The President pointed out that, while bringing this level of accessibility and innovation opens the Government up to criticism if things do not work perfectly, the simple answer that the people of Guyana have more efficient and better service.

“Why embrace a new initiative that opens up the opportunity for greater criticism on the Government if it doesn’t work? The answer is very simple for me; our only interest is in the people, ensuring they have greater, more efficient, better service, and that is what matters at the end of the day,” he said.

President deploys special team to improve healthcare at

Suddie Public Hospital

In a decisive move to enhance health-care services in Region Two (Pomeroon-Supenaam), His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali has assigned a special team to address challenges at the Suddie Public Hospital, Essequibo Coast.

The announcement was made recently during the commissioning of the Deeds and Commercial Registries Authority at Suddie.



His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali listening to the concerns raised about the operations of the Suddie Public Hospital, Essequibo Coast.

Acknowledging concerns raised about the hospital's operations, President Ali assured residents that the Government remains committed to strengthening health-care facilities. While construction of the new Lima Regional Hospital, also on the Essequibo Coast, is underway, he emphasised that immediate action is necessary to improve services at the Suddie Public Hospital.

The special team will focus on upgrading patient care and ensuring that visitors to the hospital receive modern, high-quality healthcare. Investments are being made across the region to support this transformation.

To further bolster the health-care system, President Ali announced that over 200 individuals in Region Two will be trained as nursing assistants and registered nurses, strengthening human resources in the sector.

Additionally, he has instructed the Ministry of Health and the Ministry Education to establish a University of Guyana extension in Essequibo through the Guyana Digital School. This initiative will provide scholarships and offer degree and diploma programmes in Pharmacy, Dentistry, Agricultural Science, and Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, among other fields.

"Our Government is committed to ensuring that Essequibians have access to quality healthcare, education, and employment opportunities," said the President, urging residents to embrace the investments being made to improve their lives.

Eliminating Filaria by 2030: Health Ministry expands efforts in high-risk regions

In its continued effort to eradicate lymphatic filariasis, Guyana has embarked on an ambitious two-year Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign under the National Lymphatic Filariasis Elimination Programme.

Launched in July 2024, the initiative is spearheaded by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO). With a targeted approach, this campaign is focused on eliminating and preventing the spread of the disease, bringing Guyana closer to achieving elimination status by 2030.

Lymphatic filariasis, commonly known as filaria, is a mosquito-borne parasitic disease that can lead to severe disability. The disease is transmitted through the bite of an infected Culex mosquito, which thrives in urban and semi-urban areas.

When the mosquito bites an infected person, it ingests microfilariae, which are tiny parasitic worms present in the blood. These parasites mature within the mosquito, becoming infectious larvae that are passed on to new hosts through subsequent bites.

Although filaria can be contracted in childhood, its most debilitating symptoms (swelling of the arms, legs, breasts and scrotum) are often manifested later in life, leading to long-term physical impairment and social stigma.

The disease affects over 120 million people globally, spanning regions in Asia, Africa, the Western Pacific, the Caribbean and South America.

Historical perspective

Guyana's battle against lymphatic filariasis has spanned decades. In 2003, a Ministry of Health assessment found a 9.3 percent positivity rate for filaria nationwide. This alarming discovery prompted a series of interventions, beginning with the introduction of Diethylcarbamazine (DEC) salt, a fortified table salt that was widely distributed to households.

"We put salt in our food, and salt was one of the things that was being used in a broad way across the country," recalled Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony. "They had maybe one or two importers, and they had to comply by adding DEC to the salt that was being distributed."

The DEC salt, once consumed, worked by killing microfilariae organisms in the body. However, an unexpected chemical reaction caused the salt to turn blue when heated, leading to widespread rejection by the public. This setback forced health authorities to pivot to distributing anti-filaria tablets.

Between 2016 and 2018, the Ministry distributed a combination of DEC and albendazole tablets, commonly known in Guyana as "worm tablets." While these drugs were effective, the WHO later introduced an enhanced approach -- the triple drug therapy, which includes ivermectin, alongside DEC and albendazole.

Triple drug therapy

PAHO/WHO research has shown that the triple drug combination significantly reduces microfilariae in the blood for a longer period compared to the previous double-drug treatment. More importantly, it accelerates the elimination process, requiring only two annual rounds to interrupt transmission, compared to the five-year cycle needed for the previous method. Although mild and temporary side effects may occur, the treatment is generally regarded as safe and effective.

This year, as part of the ongoing MDA campaign, the triple drug therapy is being distributed across the remaining endemic regions -- Region Three (Essequibo

Islands-West Demerara) and Region Four (Demerara-Mahaica). These two regions are the last in Guyana requiring mass treatment, signaling that the country is in the final stretch of achieving elimination status.



Aiming for elimination by 2030, National Filaria Coordinator at the Ministry of Health's Vector Control Services, Dr Annastacia Sampson, emphasised the significance of this final push. "We're looking to have that elimination status by 2030. So we have up until then to put everything in place in order to get that done," she said.

"And given that we only have two more regions to continue with for MDA, we can now shift our focus in equipping those facilities in other regions," said Sampson.

Beyond drug distribution, the Ministry continues to promote mosquito control measures to further accelerate disease elimination. These include vector control strategies such as mosquito net distribution, environmental sanitation and public awareness campaigns.

With only two regions left to complete the MDA campaign, Guyana stands on the verge of a historic public health achievement. If successful, the elimination of lymphatic filariasis will mark a significant victory for the nation, ensuring that future generations are free from the burden of this debilitating disease.

CHRONIC DISEASES UNIT

MINISTRY OF HEALTH GUYANA

PRESIDENTIAL NATIONAL NCD COMMISSION GUYANA

Poster Competition

THE DANGERS OF ~~SM~~OKING

THEME:

"Smoking Kills - Protect Your Health!"

Your Poster should be **Bold, Impactful, & Original**, showing the severe effects of smoking, including lung damage, cancer, heart disease, and the risks of secondhand smoke.

GUIDELINES

Format: A4 (11.7in x 8.3in)

Judging Criteria: Creativity, Impact, clarity of message, relevance to the theme, & Originality

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR FULL RULES & PRIZE DETAILS!

WHERE TO SUBMIT?

Chronic Diseases Unit, Ministry of Health,
Brickdam, Georgetown
pncdcommission@gmail.com
****Hardcopy Submission Required**

All Entries **MUST** be Submitted by:
16TH MAY, 2025

Diet Is Key in Managing Diabetes

Part 1: Understanding The Role of Carbohydrates and Protein in Your Diet

By Shabana Shaw

Managing diabetes effectively involves more than just monitoring blood sugar levels; it also requires a commitment to eating the right foods in their correct portion size. Persons living with diabetes should therefore develop practical strategies to maintain a balanced diet that supports their overall health while managing diabetes.

Diabetes is a long-lasting health condition that occurs when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin or when the body cannot effectively use the insulin it produces. In other words, diabetes affects the way your body turns food into energy. There are three main types of diabetes: Type 1, Type 2 and Gestational Diabetes (during pregnancy), each of which requires careful meal planning to help with controlling blood sugar levels.

Nutritionist Abigail Caleb is adamant that, through diet, one can maintain stable blood sugar levels. "Nutrition therapy constitutes one of the basic pillars in the treatment and control of diabetes mellitus, as well as the prevention or delay of the (microvascular and macrovascular) complications of diabetes mellitus," says Caleb, Senior Technical Officer - Food Security and Nutrition at the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA).



Abigail Caleb, Senior Technical Officer - Food Security and Nutrition, CARPHA

She explained that persons with diabetes need a healthy and well-balanced diet, consisting of a variety of foods from the Caribbean Six Food Groups which consists of legumes and nuts, food from animals, fats and oils, vegetables, staples and fruits. She cautioned that meal planning for diabetics

should be individualised, as no one size fits all.

According to Caleb, there is no such thing as a special "diet" for persons living with diabetes, as moderation is usually the key, particularly in controlling carbohydrate intake and timing of meals to fit the person's medication pattern.

Understanding How Carbohydrates (carb) Work in a Diabetic Meal Plan

Carbohydrates are macronutrients meaning nutrients / nourishing substances which are required by the body in large amounts. The categories in the human diet are Simple (sugars), Complex (starch) and Dietary Fibre.

According to Caleb, all carbohydrates, except dietary fibre, are broken down into glucose or "sugar" and used



USE 7- 9 INCH PLATES

for energy and are the most important source of fuel or energy for the body, particularly the brain.

“Simple carbohydrates are digested and absorbed more quickly and can cause a rapid spike in blood glucose/sugar levels. Some examples are sugar, honey, molasses, syrup, jam, jelly, chocolate, sweets, candies, pastries, cakes, pies, cookies, carbonated drinks, packet juices mixes and fruits canned with sugar,” she said.

The Nutritionist explained that complex carbohydrates take longer to be digested, absorb slowly and have a gentler effect on blood sugar levels.

“Complex carbohydrates include rice, pasta, wheat flour and products, corn, cereal porridges, cornflakes, ground provisions, breadfruit, dried peas, beans, nuts & seed, fruits vegetables (i.e., yellow and orange vegetables) and milk and yoghurt,” she counselled.

Dietary fibre consists of plant-based carbohydrates, that the body cannot digest and therefore does not cause a spike in blood sugar levels. There are two types of dietary fibre, soluble fibre and insoluble.

“Soluble fibre can be found in peas, beans, nuts, seeds, oats, barley, fruits & vegetables, ground provisions while insoluble fibre is found in the skins of vegetables & fruits, bran or outer coating of grains,” she highlighted.

Apart from its benefits of controlling blood sugar levels and reducing weight gain, dietary fibre is known for promoting healthy digestion and regular bowel movements.

“It has the ability to absorb water and as such carry out an important function of sweeping, cleaning and protecting the lower digestive tract (small and large intestines),” Caleb enlightened.

Therefore, carbohydrate food choices are guided by the carbohydrate content of foods. A diabetic should maintain a balance among the carbohydrate content categories: high carb, moderate carb, low carb and zero carb foods.

Benefits of Protein for Diabetes

Proteins are essential for the development, maintenance and life of every cell in the human body. It plays a crucial role in the diet of individuals living with diabetes and unlike carbohydrates, does not (negatively) impact blood glucose (sugar) levels.

According to Caleb, the main dietary sources of proteins are foods from the animal food group (except butter and other animal fats) and foods from the Legumes and Nuts food group such as dried peas, beans, nuts and seeds.

“Meat alternatives (soya products like chunks). There are also very small amounts of proteins in cereals (cornmeal, dried corn, oats, rice, whole grain products, breads) and in leafy, green and yellow vegetables,” she highlighted.

For individuals living with diabetes, more white meats such as fish and poultry (chicken, turkey, duck) should be consumed than red meats (i.e., beef, pork, lamb, wild meats and organ meats - liver, giblets, brains, heart, etc).

“Eat fish 3 or more times a week. Fish is rich in omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids which protect the body’s blood vessels from harm. Eat red meats and/or organ meats no more than 1-3 times a week as they have more saturated fat and cholesterol,” Caleb cautioned.

A vegetarian substitute for meat that’s rich in proteins is legumes. Some common types of legumes are beans (black beans, kidney beans), lentils, peas, chickpeas and peanuts (technically a legume, not a nut).



Persons living with diabetes must understand their diet as this is key in managing blood glucose (sugar) levels and improving quality of life. They must monitor the amount of carbohydrates they consume as some carbohydrates have a significant impact on blood sugar levels. Similarly, incorporating the right kind of protein meat in your diet can support blood sugar control and contribute to overall health.

Myth: Duck is red meat.

Fact: Duck is scientifically classified as a white meat and is considered a good source of protein.

Myth: Peanuts are a kind of nut.

Fact: Peanuts are classified as legumes and are rich in protein, healthy fats, vitamins and minerals.

Health information systems, technology workforce development programme launched



Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, delivering the keynote address at the launch of the Guyana Health Information Systems and Technology Workforce Development Programme at the Guyana Marriott Hotel, Georgetown.

The Ministry of Health's National Health Information Systems and Technology Workforce Development Programme is now underway, following the recent launching of the initiative by Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, at the Guyana Marriott Hotel, Georgetown.

The US \$100 million programme is being launched by the Greater Guyana Initiative, in collaboration with Hess Corporation, ExxonMobil Guyana Limited and China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC).

The programme will facilitate the birth of the Guyana Digital Health Training Institute, a partnership between the U.S.-based Mount Sinai Health Systems and the Ministry of Health. The institution will offer free training to healthcare workers in the public health sector in health information systems and technology.

Delivering the keynote address, Minister Anthony lauded the launching of the programme, saying that continuous training and development of healthcare workers are crucial elements for maintaining high standards of care and preparing for future health challenges.

He said the Ministry has recognised the need for digitisation to enhance healthcare delivery and has since relied on international partnerships with Mount Sinai Health Systems and the International Development Bank (IDB) for funding and expertise in the area of digital health and electronic health records.

Dr Anthony noted that the introduction of electronic health records will improve efficiency and patient care. This programme is being piloted at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) with plans being made for nationwide implementation at six newly constructed regional hospitals, which are scheduled to be commissioned this year.

The Minister explained that the Ministry has already established 84 telemedicine sites in remote communities across Guyana, a programme which he said has garnered much success in remote diagnostics, especially in ultrasounds under the guide of specialist doctors at major regional hospitals.

He further disclosed that the Ministry is working to build out an electronic disease surveillance system to monitor infectious and chronic diseases and is looking to establish systems to monitor animal diseases to prevent future pandemics.

The Minister hopes that collaborative efforts with international partners will further bolster these

initiatives, setting a precedent for healthcare advancements in the Caribbean region.

“Many Caribbean Countries are trying to implement electronic power systems. But they don’t have the personnel. So, if we are successful in what we are doing, and we are very confident that we’ll be successful, then we’ll be able to share what we have done. And I’m sure

the greater Caribbean region will also benefit from what we are doing,” he said.

Also present at the launching ceremony were Director of the Arnhold Institute for Global Health at Mount Sinai and Executive Director of Guyana Consultancy at Mount Sinai, Dr Rachel Vreeman, and Project Lead for the Greater Guyana Initiative, Ms Alicia Bess- Anderson.

MOH holds walkathon to commemorate World Down Syndrome Day



Director of Rehabilitation Services, Dr Ariane Mangar, engaging with participants during the walkathon.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, joined the Ptolemy Reid Rehabilitation Centre recently in a walkathon to mark World Down Syndrome Day, observed under the theme, “Improve Our Support Systems.”

The event aimed to raise awareness about Down Syndrome and highlighted the importance of early

diagnosis and proper care for individuals living with the condition.

According to the Centre for Disease Control, Down Syndrome is a genetic condition where a person is born with an extra chromosome. This can affect how their brain and body develop.

Speaking at the event, Minister Anthony emphasised the need for greater public education and support. He noted that while there has not been enough public discussion on Down Syndrome, it remains a critical issue in communities across the country.

“Early detection is key. Once diagnosed early, children with Down Syndrome can receive the necessary support to help them thrive,” the Minister said.

Dr Anthony expressed gratitude to the dedicated staff members at the Ptolemy Reid Rehabilitation Centre, who continue to work diligently with individuals affected by the disease. He stressed the need for decentralised services to ensure that all citizens affected get the help they need.

“With proper care, people can lead fulfilling lives, and we need to ensure that these services are available in every region,” he said.

As Guyana observed World Down Syndrome Day, the Ministry of Health encouraged continued dialogue, advocacy and education to build a more inclusive society, where individuals with Down Syndrome receive the support they need.

Among those present were Director of Rehabilitation Services, Dr Ariane Mangar, and other officials from the Ministry of Health and several Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)



Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, participating in the World Down Syndrome Day walkathon.

Gov't partnering with universities, other int'l institutions to improve local healthcare

The Government of Guyana has made a number of partnerships with countries in North America and Europe, all aimed at furthering Guyana's healthcare development.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, said that the partnerships range from Harvard University in the U.S. to McMaster University in Canada, which has many international partnerships and collaborations with universities in the U.K.

During the launch of the Universal Healthcare Voucher recently, the Minister of Health revealed that, in the case of Harvard University, a team has been helping Guyana to build its capacity to eliminate the mosquito borne disease of malaria, including through the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

"We also have another partnership with Harvard University. We have a team that has been coming down here, working with us to eliminate diseases such as malaria. And one of the outcomes of those visits is that we've been working on an app, where this AI system we're developing, will be able to read malaria slides," said Dr Anthony.

"So far, with the test applications we've run in Region Nine (Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo), it's about 99 per cent accurate. And we're hoping, once we get in more test results, that what we've developed and piloted in Guyana will be used in other parts of the world that are having malaria problems," the Minister explained.

Canada

Meanwhile, the Minister of Health spoke of Guyana's partnerships with Canada, geared towards enhancing Guyana's healthcare delivery. This has included working with York University, a highly regarded institution of higher learning in Ontario, Canada.

"While we look at the U.S., we also have very strong partnerships with Canada. And in Canada, we've been working with York University. We've trained a number of persons who are now working with us as hospital administrators. We've also trained a number of physicians who are now working on physician leadership," he said.

"So, when they go to some of these facilities we've built, they will be able to take on leadership roles. And I think that is extremely important for us, as we continue to build our systems," Dr Anthony said.

The Minister also referenced work that the Government has done with McMaster University. He revealed that, over the next few years, at least 30 persons will be able to get fellowship training at McMaster.

Guyanese doctors who received training at the Canadian University are already returning to Guyana and providing their expertise.

"Right now, we have a neonatologist who is at McMaster doing training. We have persons in cardiology, and a whole host of areas where we don't have these specialists, we're now sending them to McMaster to receive training. And they're going to return and work for us," said Minister Anthony.

"One of the good things about McMaster, when our doctors go there, they're licensed to practice in Canada. And when they've finished their training, that licence is withdrawn, and they come back home so that they can work at home. And I think that's a very good thing for us," Dr Anthony explained.

Reference was also made to Mohawk College, a Canada-based institution, where Guyana will be sending trainees to become ultrasound technicians. The first batch of graduates will, in turn, pass on their expertise to other Guyanese. This initiative forms part of broader collaborations with Canada.

Europe

Touching on British assistance, Dr Anthony revealed that they are seeking more training opportunities for Guyanese in the U.K. He said a number of Guyanese have already received training at various British universities in Public Health.

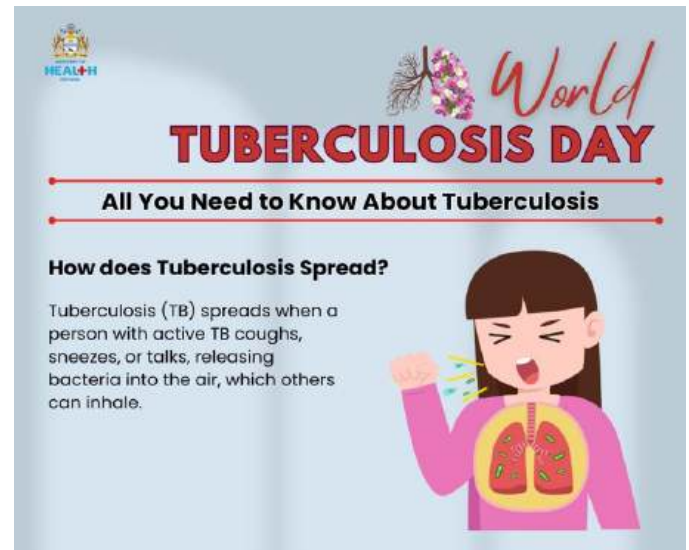
"But very soon, we'll be working with them in a closer manner, so that a number of their academic institutions will customise programmes for us, so that we can send our doctors, nurses and other professionals to be trained and come back to Guyana," he said. "So this is a very extensive programme we're developing with the U.K."

“We also have a very close partnership with the EU (European Union), and recently when the President went to Barbados, an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) was signed between Guyana, Barbados and the EU, so that we can extend our collaboration,” the Minister revealed.

He pointed out that one of the things Guyana that will be looking to benefit from in this partnership is support from the EU, so that the country can become a hub for manufacturing pharmaceuticals and vaccines, saying they will not only be looking to build out Guyana’s regulatory capacity, but also to send persons to Europe to be trained.

“And they have identified Lithuania as one of the countries to offer us technical capacity building, so that we’ll be working very closely with them. In addition, some of the funding they set aside will allow us to have academic partnerships with various universities in the EU, and we’ve already visited and talked to some of these

institutions, in Germany, Holland, Belgium and France,” he added.



Guyana can become pharmaceutical, vaccine manufacturing hub -- Health Minister



Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, delivering open remarks at the Cardiology and Endocrinology (CE) Symposium 2025.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, reaffirmed the Government’s commitment to transforming Guyana’s healthcare sector at the recently concluded Cardiology and Endocrinology (CE) Symposium 2025, hosted by the ChiroSyn Discovery

Technologies Inc., a Canadian based pharmaceutical company.

The event, marking 15 years of excellence, brought together leading Canadian and Guyanese doctors, researchers, and healthcare professionals for knowledge exchange on cutting-edge advancements in cardiology, endocrinology, pharmacy, physiatry and genetic research.

During his opening remarks at the Pegasus Corporate Suites, Georgetown, Dr Anthony outlined the Government’s strategic plans to enhance the healthcare sector, focusing on pharmaceutical manufacturing and legislative reforms, and the introduction of advanced medical technologies.

The Minister highlighted the Government’s vision to position Guyana as a key hub for pharmaceutical and vaccine manufacturing. He noted that legislative reforms are underway to modernise the Food and Drug Department regulations, which currently date back to 1974. These changes will improve the regulatory framework for medicines, medical devices and vaccines,

creating a more conducive environment for investment in the pharmaceutical sector.

"We are laying the foundation for companies to establish their manufacturing base in Guyana. This is the next wave of development for our health sector," said Dr Anthony.

The Minister also spoke about ongoing partnerships with the European Union (EU), revealing that Guyana has signed an agreement with the EU to support the establishment of a pharmaceutical manufacturing hub.

He noted that this initiative is similar to the post-COVID-19 pharmaceutical sector developments in Rwanda, which received EU backing.

In addition to pharmaceuticals, the Minister provided updates on the expansion of specialised healthcare services. He announced that six new hospitals will be commissioned this year, alongside the construction of a state-of-the-art Oncology centre and a Stroke Rehabilitation facility. These projects aim to decentralise healthcare services, ensuring that quality medical care is accessible across the country.

President reaffirms govt's 'no-nonsense' approach towards violence against women

Access to jobs, education, business opportunities accelerated

The women of Guyana are making inroads in every industry and, with the Government's support, more opportunities, such as scholarships, are readily available to them. This was affirmed by His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali during International Women's Day and the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The President, in an official statement, said that the declaration became a key policy framework for advancing women's rights, gender equality and female empowerment across the world.

"Guyana has continued to pursue action on several fronts in accordance with the areas of action identified in the Declaration and Platform for Action. We have taken significant steps to empower women economically, recognising their vital role in national development," he said. "We are equipping women with the resources, skills, and support they need to thrive as entrepreneurs and leaders, fostering innovation and economic independence."

The part-time jobs programme has provided thousands of women with opportunities to earn income, support their households and achieve financial stability. The Women in Agriculture Initiative is creating pathways for women to access greater economic opportunities in the agricultural sector, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to the nation's food security and economic growth.



His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali with mothers who recently gave birth at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC).

The President also alluded to the Guyana Online Learning Academy (GOAL), noting that women make up the majority of the cohorts of students.

Government has also been assiduously pursuing increased entrepreneurial and education opportunities, as well as home ownership for women.

Against that backdrop, Dr Ali explained that those initiatives reflect a comprehensive approach to advancing women's economic empowerment and ensuring their active participation in Guyana's development.

"In Guyana, we are committed to ensuring greater participation of women in decision-making by creating more opportunities and amplifying their voices in political and leadership roles. The Government has actively supported initiatives to increase women's representation in governance, recognising their critical contributions to shaping policies and driving progress," he said.

'No-nonsense' approach

The persistent level of violence against women and girls is not going unchecked by the Government, as the President said that his administration has adopted a "no-nonsense approach," implementing stringent measures to hold perpetrators accountable and ensure justice for survivors.

President Ali said through programmes such as the Spotlight Initiative and a strengthened legal framework, his Government is providing greater support and protection for abused women and girls, offering them access to shelters, counselling and resources to rebuild their lives.

"We are committed to eradicating gender-based violence as we strive to create a society where every woman and girl can live free from fear and violence," President Ali said.

On International Women's Day, under the theme, "Accelerate Action," he highlighted the impact of women in society and the challenges they face.

"Together, we will continue to build a more inclusive, equitable and prosperous Guyana, where every woman can thrive and realise her full potential," said the President.

Health Ministry and GPHC host workshop to promote kidney health and early disease detection

The Ministry of Health's Chronic Diseases Unit, in collaboration with the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), recently successfully hosted its annual Kidney Disease Workshop. The event was organised in recognition of World Kidney Awareness Month, observed every March, under the theme: "Are Your Kidneys OK? Detect Early, Protect Kidney Health."

This initiative underscores the importance of early detection and timely intervention in renal disease. By focusing on identifying risk factors and promoting regular kidney health screenings, the workshop aimed to educate individuals on preventive measures and management strategies for chronic kidney disease (CKD).

Throughout the session, key topics were addressed, including the importance of kidney health – understanding risk factors associated with kidney disease; preventive measures – steps individuals can take to maintain kidney function and reduce the risk of CKD; and management of kidney disease – strategies for effective treatment and lifestyle adjustments for individuals diagnosed with kidney disease.

The annual workshop remains a critical platform for increasing awareness, empowering communities with knowledge, and reinforcing the importance of proactive kidney health management.

By fostering early detection and prevention strategies, the Ministry of Health and GPHC continue to lead efforts in reducing the burden of kidney disease in the population.



Participants of the Kidney Health and Early Detection Workshop.

MOH, IAEA discusses strengthening of technical cooperation in health care

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, recently met with a representative from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Ms Saskia Fraser-Smith, who is currently visiting Guyana, at the Ministry of Health's Brickdam Headquarters, Georgetown.

The discussions focused on strengthening existing technical cooperation projects and exploring new areas of collaboration to enhance the country's healthcare system. Also present at the meeting was Medical Physicist attached to the Ministry of Health, Ms Petal Surujpaul.

The IAEA team and the Ministry of Health engaged in productive dialogue on expanding support in key areas, including cancer control, specialised medical training, regulatory frameworks and emergency preparedness. With the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases, such as cancer, the Ministry recognises the critical role of nuclear medicine and radiation therapy in improving diagnosis, treatment and patient outcomes.

The Ministry of Health is looking forward to continued collaboration with the IAEA in strengthening the country's medical and regulatory capacity, ultimately improving health outcomes for all Guyanese.



Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, in dialogue with representative of the IAEA, Ms Saskia Fraser-Smith (left), and Medical Physicist attached to the Ministry of Health, Ms Petal Surujpaul.

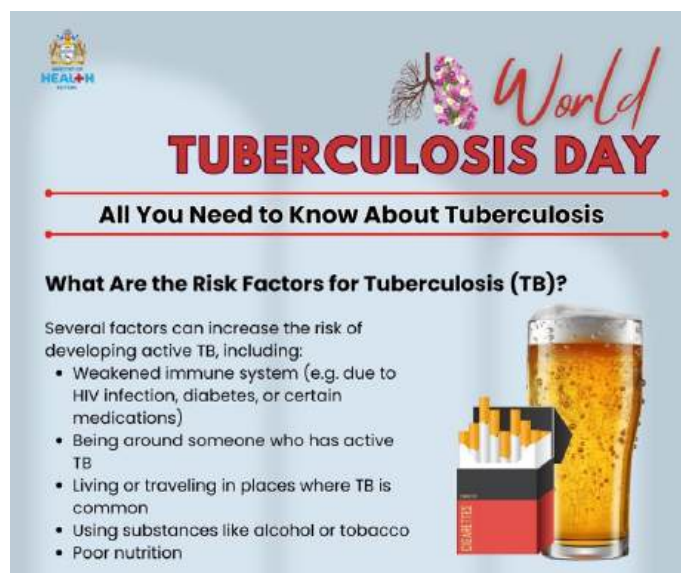
MOH hosts disability, rehabilitation services programme review

The Ministry of Health's Disability and Rehabilitation Services Department recently convened a Regional Rehabilitation Meeting at Cara Lodge, Quamina Street in Georgetown.

The meeting sought to align regional rehabilitation staff with national healthcare goals and enhance service delivery. Discussions focused on expanding access to rehabilitation services, addressing challenges in rural areas and improving public awareness and referral systems.

The meeting also emphasised mentorship, clinical education and quality improvement, aligning with the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals to strengthen rehabilitation services across Guyana.

Delivering remarks, Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, reaffirmed the Government's commitment to enhancing rehabilitation services across



the country. He emphasised the importance of ensuring equitable access for all citizens, particularly those in remote regions.

“We must continue strengthening our rehabilitation services to guarantee that persons with disabilities and those recovering from injuries receive the quality care they deserve,” he said.

“Our goal is to build a healthcare system where rehabilitation is integrated at every level, from community-based programmes to specialised hospital services,” Dr Anthony said.

Under the Sustainable Development Goals, number three promotes good health and well-being for all, including access to essential healthcare and rehabilitation services. Number eight focuses on inclusive economic growth, employment and decent work opportunities for all, including persons with disabilities. Number 10 aims to reduce inequalities by ensuring equal access to healthcare, education and employment opportunities.

Also present at the meeting were Director of Rehabilitation Services, Dr Ariane Mangar, and Director of Family and Primary Health Care Services, Dr Ertenisa Hamilton, along with regional heads of Rehabilitation Units.

Guyana advances transplant programme with establishment of new lab



Lead trainer Dr Karina Omari (seated), along with another representative from One Lambda, a laboratory and biotechnology company based in the U.S., and local training participants.

The Guyana Human Organ and Tissue Transplant Agency (HOATTA) is continuing to build robust systems to strengthen both living and deceased organ donation and transplantation. A significant milestone in this effort is the establishment of a Human Leukocyte Antigen (HLA) laboratory, which will enhance the country's transplant capabilities by providing essential testing locally.

To date, the HOATTA has made significant strides in building the capacity of clinical staff at the Georgetown

Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) involved in the transplant process.

Several healthcare professionals have received advanced training in Barcelona, Spain, equipping them with the expertise needed to improve organ and tissue transplant services in Guyana. Standard operating procedure and protocols were developed and, in 2024, the GPHC was assessed and certified as a transplant center -- the only certified transplant center in the country.

A key component of a successful transplant program is HLA testing, which plays a critical role in determining donor-recipient compatibility. HLA markers help match donors and recipients more effectively, reducing the risk of organ rejection and improving transplant outcomes. Currently, HLA testing is performed abroad, leading to high costs and delays for patients in need of transplants.

In a major step forward, the Ministry of Health has procured state-of-the-art equipment to establish the HLA laboratory, including a Luminex machine, centrifuge, thermocycler and reagents at a cost of US\$150,000. This investment underscores the Government's commitment to enhancing the country's transplant services and ensuring timely and accessible care for patients.

In February 2025, 15 laboratory personnel were trained in HLA testing, gaining hands-on experience with the newly acquired equipment at the National Public Health Reference Laboratory.

The lead trainer was Dr Karina Omari, HLA laboratory expert from One Lambda, a well-known laboratory and biotechnology company based in the U.S. that specializes in HLA typing and antibody detection for organ and tissue transplantation.

During a briefing meeting with Dr Omari and her team, Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, emphasized the importance of this milestone for Guyana's transplant program. He noted that the establishment of the HLA laboratory marks a transformative step in Guyana's efforts to enhance organ and tissue transplantation in Guyana.

"With local HLA testing, patients will no longer have to bear the high costs of overseas testing, and results will be

available much faster, ultimately improving the efficiency and success of transplants in the country," he said.

The Minister thanked Director of the National Blood Transfusion Services and HOATTA's HLA Laboratory Focal Point, Dr Pedro Lewis, for leading the initiative. In turn, Dr Lewis congratulated the medical technologists and encouraged them to continue to practice and use their skills for greater accuracy and reliability of results.

The establishment of the HLA laboratory is a testament to Ministry of Health and HOATTA's commitment to advancing Guyana's transplant programme. By strengthening local capacity and infrastructure, the Ministry of Health and HOATTA are ensuring that life-saving transplants become more accessible and affordable for all Guyanese in need.

Dr Ali explained that, in the not-too-distant future, every child from birth would have access to their medical records. This will be made possible when the Government launches the Electronic Health Records (EHR) system.

A U.K.-based company, RioMed Limited, has been contracted to design, supply and install the US\$3.3 million system.

"Important to that is the level of responsibility it brings with it. Because there is an automatic assessment of the medical professionals on the level of services that they deliver, holding people more accountable. We have to be more accountable with the investments that we are making," President Ali pointed out.

He said the key to great research, decision-making, crime fighting strategies and policy are all supported by data.

"We want a system that relies heavily on independence. When we invest in the technology and information system, it must remove as far as possible human biases. That is the system we are going to introduce very shortly. That is the future we are embracing," he said.

Gov't working with AI, robotics providers to train doctors in surgical treatment

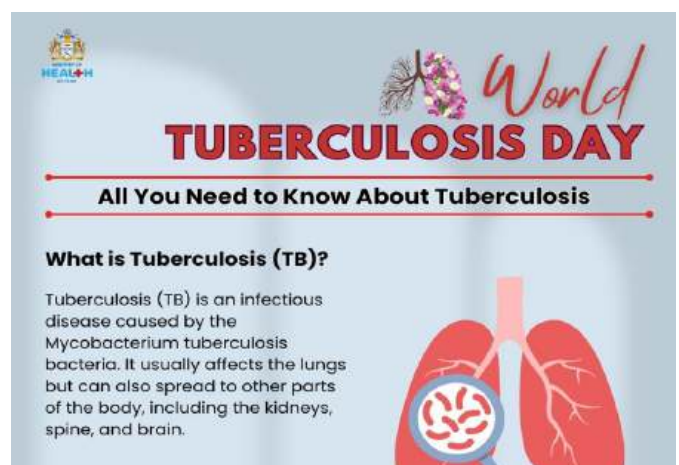
The Government is working with the best Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotics providers to train doctors in AI-guided surgical treatment as part of transforming Guyana's healthcare system.

His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali made the announcement during the recent launch of the Universal Healthcare Voucher initiative at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre at Liliendaal, Georgetown.

The ambitious plan is already at the negotiation phase which will come into operation early next year.

"We will have a panel of doctors supported by an external panel of doctors that will be supporting the healthcare system on 100 percent AI and robotics. That is already in negotiations. And that will come into operation early in the new year," he said.

The Government is working to build a robust, world-class healthcare system to deliver specialised medical services to every citizen. This health sector will provide services to Guyanese, as well as the Caribbean region.



MOH receives GY\$6.5M in donations of medical supplies from Food For The Poor

The Ministry of Health (MOH) has received a massive donation of medical supplies valued at GY\$6.5 million from Food For Poor, Guyana to enhance maternal healthcare services at the Baramita Cottage Hospital in Region One (Barima-Waini).

This initiative supports the Government of Guyana's commitment to improve service delivery in rural communities at primary health care levels. The donation includes baby cots, bedside cupboards, a refrigerator and semi-electric beds.

During the handover ceremony, Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, expressed his gratitude to Food For The Poor, recognising their ongoing collaboration with the Regional Health Services to improve healthcare delivery.

He highlighted the transformation of Baramita's healthcare facility, which has progressed from a health

post, with a single community health worker, to a fully functioning cottage hospital.

"What we have been able to do at Baramita is extraordinary. We started with limited services, and over the years, we have expanded, improving infrastructure and personnel to offer better care. This donation complements our vision, particularly in maternal and child health," said the Minister.

The Minister emphasised that the donation is particularly timely, as it coincides with International Women's Day, aligning with the theme "Accelerating Impact."

He reaffirmed the Government's commitment to reducing maternal deaths and improving maternal healthcare, noting that continuous investment in quality care for pregnant women is crucial.

Among those present at the donation ceremony were Director General of the Ministry of Health, Dr Vishwa Mahadeo; Hinterland Coordinator, Mr Michael Gouvias; Regional Health Officer, Dr Steven Cheefoon; Chief Executive Officer of Food for Poor, Ms Andrea Benjamin; and Senior Project Associate, Ms Valini Leitch.



Items that were donated by Food For The Poor.

Chinese medical team donates US\$60,000 medical equipment to GPHC

Guyana-China medical collaboration yielding outstanding results, deepening relations

Guyana's health sector continues to achieve remarkable milestones as Chinese and local doctors are working hand in hand at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation

(GPHC) and at the Linden Hospital Complex to deliver advanced medical services to the people.

Recently, China's medical team donated fluorescent laparoscopic equipment worth US\$60,000 to the GPHC, and this equipment has already been successfully used on a patient.

The leader of China's 20th Medical Team, Dr Bob Du, along with other Chinese doctors, explained the ongoing medical collaboration between Guyana and China. Dr Du said the donation of advanced medical equipment will enhance minimally invasive surgery at the GPHC.

He highlighted that the general surgery team at the GPHC, in collaboration with Chinese doctors, successfully completed the first complex biliary tract surgery using the fluorescent laparoscope. The patient was discharged without complications and, according to the Chinese Medical Team, this new equipment will soon be widely used in a range of precise surgeries, including those for liver tumours and gastrointestinal tumours.

Dr Du noted that, in recent years, the Medical Team has worked closely with local doctors, leading to significant advancements in minimally invasive surgical techniques used by the Hepatobiliary Surgery Department at GPHC. As a result, local doctors are now able to perform more

also highlighted how fluorescent laparoscopic technology improves surgical outcomes compared to traditional methods.

Dr David Qian, a member of the Chinese Medical Team and Consultant in General Surgery at the GPHC, explained that fluorescence technology highlights malignant tissues and sentinel lymph nodes, allowing surgeons to accurately identify tumour margins and lymphatic drainage. This enhances precision in oncology surgeries, reducing the presence of residual cancer cells and lowering recurrence rates.

Additionally, surgeons can receive dynamic imaging updates during the procedure, enabling them to make immediate adjustments as needed.

"This contrasts with traditional reliance on preoperative scans, which may not reflect intraoperative changes. Fluorescent laparoscopy enhances precision, safety and efficiency, leading to faster recovery, fewer complications, and improved oncologic outcomes," said Dr Qian.

Dr Qian further stated that with the help of advanced medical equipment, local doctors can fully display their talents and provide a higher level of medical services to citizens.



China's Medical Team donated fluorescent laparoscopic equipment worth US\$60,000 to the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC).

laparoscopic surgeries.

"This move aims to work with GPHC's Hepatobiliary Surgery Department to keep up with the forefront of international medical care," he said. The medical team

"The success of this operation is the result of the joint efforts of doctors from the two countries, which fully reflects the advanced precision and standardised surgical techniques and concepts," Dr Qian said.

He said the continued in-depth application and development of this technology in Guyana will further improve the diagnosis and treatment level of local complex surgical operations, improve the survival rate of tumour patients, reduce the mortality rate, and thereby benefit the people of Guyana.

“This is of great significance to the co-operation between the two countries in the field of health,” Dr Qian affirmed.

The Medical Team also pointed out the strong international alliance between China and Guyana, noting

how the country’s health sector has reached new heights. The doctors shared that, over the past 30 years, both nations have overcome cultural differences and language barriers, building a foundation of mutual trust.

Whether at GPHC or at the Linden Hospital Complex, Chinese and local doctors have collaborated to tackle medical challenges and provide high-quality healthcare to the people of Guyana. The Chinese Medical Team emphasised that, in recent years, the GPHC has selected exceptional doctors to visit Chinese hospitals for exchanges and training, annually.

NCD Commission honours students at inaugural essay, poster competition



Chairman of the Presidential National Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Commission, Dr Leslie Ramsammy, and Advisor to the Minister of Health, Dr Bheri Ramsaran, alongside parents and participants of the Essay and Poster Competition.

The Presidential National Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Commission recently hosted an awards ceremony to honour students who participated in its first-ever Essay and Poster Competition.

The competition, aimed at raising awareness about NCDs among young people, saw the participation of 15 students from various schools across the country.

In his remarks, Chairman of the NCD Commission, Dr Leslie Ramsammy, commended the students for their dedication and creativity in addressing critical health issues. He emphasised the importance of youth engagement in health advocacy and education, noting that competitions like these foster a deeper understanding of NCDs and encourage proactive health practices from an early age.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, also addressed the gathering, extending congratulations to all

participants and awardees. He highlighted key initiatives within the Ministry of Health that support early screening for diabetes and other NCDs, as well as the School Health Programme, which plays a vital role in promoting healthier lifestyles among students.

The Minister reiterated the Government’s commitment to tackling NCDs through education, prevention and early intervention. The students demonstrated exceptional creativity and knowledge through their essays and posters, leading to the following winners being recognised:

- 1st Place: Subrina Dean – Mae’s Secondary School.
- 2nd Place: Temidara Oyedoyum – School of the Nations.
- 3rd Place: Diya Rijhwani – School of the Nations.

Special awards were also presented for:

- Best Essay: Sumaiya Amin – Tuschen Primary School.
- Best Poster: Sajid Amin – Queen’s College High School.
- Best Poster: Geronimo Simon – St. Cuthbert’s School.

Also in attendance at the event were, Advisor to the Minister of Health, Dr Bheri Ramsaran, along with staff from the Ministry of Health’s Chronic Disease Unit and officials from the NCD Commission.

The NCD Commission expressed its gratitude to the participating schools, teachers and parents for their support and encouraged more students to take part in future initiatives aimed at promoting public health and wellness.

Health Minister conducts walkthrough of \$200M retrofitted boiler room at GPHC



Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, recently conducted a walkthrough of the newly retrofitted boiler room at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), a critical infrastructural upgrade, valued at \$200 million.

This major refurbishment is aimed at enhancing the efficiency and reliability of the hospital's heating and sterilisation systems, as well as ensuring improved patient care and operational sustainability. The upgraded facility features modernised equipment designed to support the hospital's expanding healthcare services.

Speaking during the visit, Minister Anthony underscored the importance of the project.

"Having steam in the hospital for sterilisation is a very important thing, and if that is not working effectively, it can create problems for us in terms of infection control. So, I'm very happy that we have been able to resolve this, and we have done so in a way that provides additional capacity," he said. "Going forward, the hospital shouldn't have any problems with steam."

The project is in keeping with the Guyana Government's ongoing commitment to enhancing healthcare infrastructure nationwide and ensuring that hospitals are equipped with state-of-the-art technology to meet the growing needs of the population.

Chairman of the GPHC Board, Dr Leslie Ramsammy, and Chief Executive Officer, Mr Robbie Rambarran, accompanied the Minister on the site visit, providing insights into the improvements made and the expected impact on daily hospital operations.

Gov't developing AI-based app for Malaria testing

The government is developing an Artificial Intelligence (AI) application for malaria testing, aiming to eradicate the disease.

Minister of Health, Dr Frank Anthony announced the initiative at the launch of the Universal Healthcare Voucher held at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre at Liliendaal, last Saturday.

Dr Anthony noted that this initiative is being executed through a collaboration with Harvard University.

The app, already tested in Region Nine with 99% accuracy, targets malaria, a prevalent infectious disease in the region.

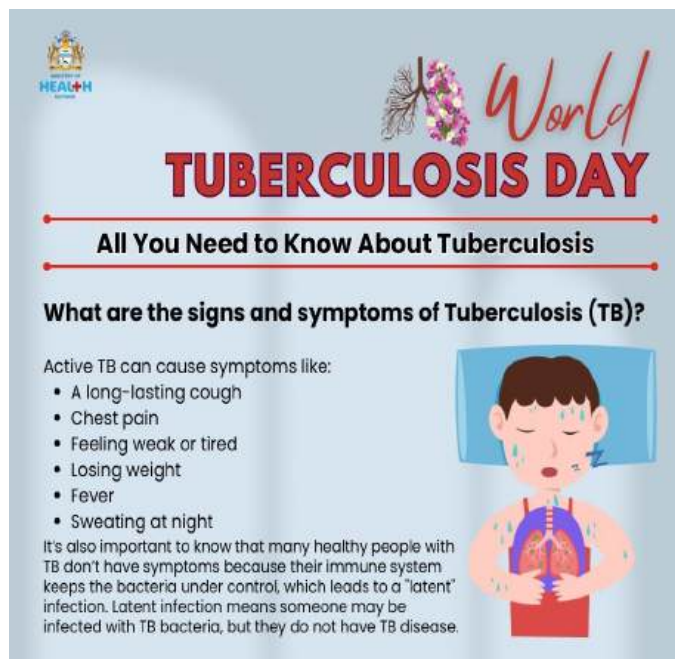
Once fully operational, Dr Anthony is optimistic that the application will be utilised to aid other malaria-affected countries.

"And we are hoping that once we get in more test results that what we have developed and pilot here in Guyana that this now would be used in other parts of the world where there is malaria," the health minister explained.

In 2024, the ministry launched the Long-Lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLINs) mass distribution campaign in several regions as part of ongoing efforts to reduce malaria.

As part of this campaign, thousands of insecticide-treated nets were distributed to malaria-affected areas across Regions One, Seven, Eight, and Nine.

Apart from this, continuous training programmes are being facilitated to tackle this disease in remote mining communities.



Health Minister visits Oscar Joseph District Hospital

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, along with regional officials, recently visited the Oscar Joseph District Hospital (OJDH) in Region Two (Pomeroon-Supenaam).

The Minister toured the facility and engaged with healthcare professionals to discuss ongoing efforts aimed at improving healthcare access and quality in the region. Recently, the OJDH underwent significant upgrades, with an investment of \$30 million, to expand its services and enhance patient care.

Gov't launches \$10,000 universal healthcare voucher programme in Region Two



Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, addresses a gathering in Region Two (Pomeroon-Supenaam).

Residents of Region Two (Pomeroon-Supenaam) no longer have to pay for basic medical examinations, as the Ministry of Health has begun distributing the \$10,000 universal healthcare voucher along the Essequibo Coast.

The Government of Guyana has catered for 500,000 citizens nationwide to access these tests through the initiative.

The programme is expected to cost the treasury \$5 billion this year. It covers a range of critical medical tests, including complete blood count (CBC), liver, kidney and thyroid function tests, as well as prostate-specific antigen (PSA) tests.

Speaking recently at the launch, Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, said the initiative

complements other healthcare programmes introduced by the Ministry.

Last year, the Government rolled out the Eye Testing and Spectacle Voucher programme valued at \$17,000 for children aged 18 years and below, and adults aged 65 and above. This year, the age eligibility for adults was lowered to 50.

Additionally, an \$8,000 cervical screening voucher was introduced last year.

“We have lots of programmes that are going to help people to improve their lives. We want people to take advantage of these programmes because they’re all free and they will help you to live a healthier life,” the Minister said.

Dr Anthony stressed the importance of community participation in ensuring the initiative’s success. “We have to get a partnership between the Ministry and

people in the communities. If you spread the word and tell people to ensure that they come and collect their voucher, then that is going to help us,” he explained.

Member of Parliament, Honourable Ms Nandranie Coonjah, thanked the Government on behalf of the residents for crafting such a project. She noted that Essequibo should no longer be seen as the Cinderella county, since it is being afforded all Government services found elsewhere in the country.

“We’ve been hearing so much on health and I want to remind you that a healthy nation is a wealthy nation. If you have good health, you’re able to work, you’re able to earn, and you’re able to access all things that you need in life,” said Ms Coonjah.

The Government has partnered with 49 accredited public and private health institutions to roll out the programme. The vouchers will be available at health centres, hospitals, and medical outreaches.

Region Two mothers get \$100,000 newborn cash grants

Welcoming a newborn has gotten easier for parents in Region Two (Pomeroon-Supenaam), as the Ministry of Health recently began distributing the newborn cash grant, offering much-needed financial relief to families.

The grant, amounting to \$100,000 per baby, was launched nationally on March 8 by His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali.

It provides parents with a portion of the financial package they need to ensure a child’s wholesome development. Several parents turned up to benefit from the initiative at the Public Hospital in Suddie, Essequibo Coast.

Residents Ms Angelina Permansingh and her husband Mr Richard Ramdeen explained how the assistance will help offset expenses that will be used to take care of the child.

“It’s a great initiative, especially for those families that are not well off. For my family it would help offset expenses. You need formula and pampers and so on,” Ms Permansingh said.

“It will help with travel expenses because you have to be up and down, so at least this is going to help put back something in your pocket,” said Mr Ramdeen.

Another resident, Ms Madonna Smith has just given birth to her third child. She spoke about the weight that has



been lifted off her shoulders as a result of the Government’s new cash grant initiative.

“It is a good initiative and now it will be easier for me. I will put my money to good use to buy things for the baby like pampers and so on,” she said.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, who launched the initiative in the region, explained that the programme is aligned with the Government’s plans to build prosperity countrywide.

“There are lots of opportunities for the children to have a better future than what we had. That’s what this

Government wants to do. We want to make sure that the prosperity that the country is experiencing is given to all our people across the country," he said.

"Not only is the Government building that prosperity through direct cash transfers, but through an investment in infrastructure that is critical for building a healthy nation as well," said Dr Anthony.

A Paediatric and Maternal Hospital is currently under construction in Ogle, East Coast Demerara, which will provide world-class healthcare to mothers and children across Guyana.

The Health Minister also pointed to the new state-of-the-art Lima Regional Hospital, Essequibo Coast that will be opened in a few months.

Suddie Hospital gets \$43 million mammogram machine



Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank, Anthony inspecting the new mammogram machine at the Suddie Public Hospital, Essequibo Coast.

Access to breast cancer screening services has now been expanded to women along the Essequibo Coast,

"We're making it even better on the Essequibo Coast here, because at the new hospital, you will also have a birthing suite. You will have a special section for pregnant women, and even if you have a premature baby, there will be a neonatal unit that will take care of these premature babies," he explained.

Minister Anthony urged the parents to take full advantage of the healthcare opportunities that are being made available by the Government.

The \$100,000 newborn cash grant is estimated to cost the treasury some \$1.3 billion annually.

following the commissioning of a modern \$43 million mammogram machine at Suddie Public Hospital.

Speaking at the commissioning ceremony recently, Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, noted that the machine will help to increase access to early detection and eliminate the need for them to travel to Georgetown for screening.

As the Government continues to implement preventative care to reduce breast cancer mortality, Dr Anthony emphasised the need for women to be screened to lower their risks. "So, every woman from 40 to 65 years, we are encouraging you to make sure that you go to get your mammography test done," he said.

Previously, the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) was the only public health institution providing mammography services.

Recently, the Linden Hospital Complex in Region Ten (Upper Demerara-Berbice) received its first state-of-the-art mammogram machine. In the coming months, the Government will install mammography machines at the hospitals in New Amsterdam in Region Six (East Berbice-Corentyne) and Lethem in Region Nine (Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo), making it easier for females to access screening services.

The provision of these machines is part of the Government efforts aimed at enhancing cancer care through prompt prognosis and treatment.

Among those present at the launch were the Regional Chairperson, Ms Vilma DaSilva; Regional Health Officer, Dr Ranjeev Singh; and Member of Parliament, Ms Nandranie Coonjah.

Health Minister visits Exceptional Learners' Centre

In observance of World Down Syndrome Day



Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, during his visit to the Exceptional Learners' Centre.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, recently visited the teachers and students at the Exceptional Learners' Centre in Cottonfield, Region Two (Pomeroon-Supenaam), as part of activities for World Down Syndrome Day, an observance marked every year to raise awareness and promote inclusion for individuals with Down Syndrome.

According to the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), Down Syndrome is a genetic condition where a person is born with an extra chromosome. This can affect how their brain and body develop.

The Exceptional Learners' Centre, established in February of this year, is the region's first facility dedicated to specialised education for individuals with special needs.



The Exceptional Learners' Centre in Cottonfield, Region Two (Pomeroon-Supenaam).

New mammogram machine commissioned at New Amsterdam Hospital

Women aged 40 to 65 years old from Region Six (East Berbice-Corentyne) will no longer have to travel to Georgetown for breast cancer screening, following the commissioning of a new mammogram machine at the New Amsterdam Hospital.

The new machine has improved the hospital's ability to detect, diagnose and monitor breast cancer locally.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, highlighted the Government's commitment to improving healthcare access and preventative care during a commissioning ceremony held recently.

The Minister urged women to prioritise regular mammograms and said plans are underway to expand cancer awareness and prevention programmes in the region. This is part of a broader Government initiative to install four new mammogram machines in hospitals across Guyana.

Machines have already been installed at Suddie Hospital in Region Two (Pomeroon-Supenaam) and Linden Hospital Complex in Region Ten (Upper Demerara-Berbice). A similar machine will soon be operational at the Lethem Regional Hospital in Region Nine (Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo).

Before these additions, only the Georgetown Public Hospital (GPHC) offered mammogram services, making it challenging for women from far-flung areas to access screening.



Over 200 to benefit from Patient Care Assistant training

The Patient Care Assistant (PCA) training programme, recently launched in Region Six (East Berbice-Corentyne), will see more than 200 persons participating over the next four months to support nurses and other medical professionals.

The comprehensive programme includes theoretical instruction and practical clinical training. It covers basic aspects including patient care, infection prevention, medical ethics and emergency response.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, launched the initiative at the Berbice High School's auditorium in New Amsterdam, Berbice. He highlighted the importance of investing in healthcare education and workforce development, particularly with the healthcare system's rapid expansion.

The Health Minister believes that a more qualified medical staff will lead to more effective healthcare and improved patient outcomes.

Minister Anthony urged the trainees to provide high-quality care to enhance service efficiency. He said the participants will be certified and employed at various healthcare facilities across the region on completion of the course.

The participants were also encouraged to take advantage of other training programmes in the sector to elevate themselves. These include the nursing assistant and registered nursing (RN) programmes.



Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, flanked by regional officials and participants of the PCA training programme

"There are different opportunities that we are offering to people. If you have the desire to progress, then, the opportunities are going to be there for you to progress. We have been investing a lot of resources to train people," said Dr Anthony.

He explained that the new training facility underway in New Amsterdam will have simulation laboratories and other essential amenities to provide training to persons in the medical profession. The training facility will be opened by the end of this year.

“Over the next couple of years, we will see Region Six being transformed into a teaching hub for medicine,” the Minister said.

These efforts are aligned with the Government’s overarching goal of decentralising healthcare programmes and services, while guaranteeing access to a qualified medical workforce in the country.

Greater affordability, wider access to healthcare

With launch of Universal Healthcare Voucher



Citizens throughout Guyana are witnessing a transformation of the healthcare sector into a world-class system, with the recent launch of the Universal Healthcare Voucher, marking a significant step toward realising this ambitious vision.

His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali officially launched the initiative at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre (ACCC) in Liliendaal, Georgetown, where he addressed citizens of all ages from across the country on the developments taking place in Guyana, especially in the health sector.

“We are not only going to build a world-class healthcare system but we are going to deliver world-class healthcare services to every citizen of this country,” the President told the large gathering.

The Universal Healthcare Voucher caters for a number of tests that are essential in managing one’s health. It offers a \$10,000 Universal Healthcare Voucher to every

Guyanese. The general screening blood tests include haemoglobin (hb), lipid profile, liver function, kidney function, urinalysis and thyroid function tests, to name a few.

Additionally, citizens can get a 40 to 70 percent discount from the initial costs of medical tests offered at hospitals and laboratories through a Government partnership with more than 30 local facilities, including private labs and hospitals.

As for the hinterland communities, specific programmes are being worked out to ensure citizens receive their vouchers. A sum of \$5 billion was invested in the initiative, which forms part of the Government’s effort to achieve universal healthcare.

“For the voucher that you see here, and the prices on the voucher, there’s an added benefit. All of these prices would have in it, inherently, a 40 to 70 percent discount from what they were originally at the private labs and hospitals,” said Dr Ali.

Guyana’s health sector, since the Government took office in 2020, has seen an upward trajectory.



The President emphasised that the Government has bolstered its partnerships with international allies to further improve healthcare in Guyana.

“These partnerships didn’t develop overnight; rather, they are the result of a strategic foreign policy and a Government focused on hard work and delivering results,” he said. “Our health foreign policy has brought tremendous goodwill and results for our country, and we must applaud that.”

Further, the President announced that because of the collaboration with one of the country’s international partners and the Men on Mission (MOM), there will soon be a nationwide prostate screening programme, aimed at reaching thousands of men. This initiative will prioritise early detection and awareness.

Already, the Government has spent some time with U.S.-based Northwell Health on mapping a strategy for three prominent cancers, which include prostate, breast and colon. The President pointed out that Government is mapping an early detection strategy toward national screening and treatment.

“Not only are we building these partnerships, but we are investing in the equipment, technology and the tools for treatment,” said President Ali.

The President also commended the private healthcare sector for improving its services to better serve the people. These positive results will support the Government’s building out of the public healthcare sector and this will aid in ensuring that the healthcare ecosystem can work seamlessly.

Notably, the Eye Testing and Spectacles programme, which continues this year, was launched in June 2024 by the Ministry of Health, and is aimed at supporting Guyanese citizens by providing eye tests, screenings and assistance with spectacles, if necessary.

Similarly, the Cervical Cancer Screening programme was also launched in June 2024, and is set to continue this year, as part of a comprehensive plan for the elimination of cervical cancer.

Early detection

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, in his remarks, underscored the benefits of the healthcare voucher, especially for early detection. He said the Government has been working to ensure that there are healthier children in the classroom.

“We also took the opportunity in this initiative to ensure we focus on our children, and this is also complementing a programme that we introduced about a year and a half ago, where we had started a school health programme with going into the schools and screening every child to ensure they’re healthy,” he said.

Dr Anthony explained that other leading health conditions are also being tackled by the Ministry of Health. For instance, the Ministry has been working with the U.S.-based Mount Sinai Health System to develop diabetes guidelines and a programme to tackle cardiovascular diseases.

Citizens welcome Universal Healthcare Voucher

The Universal Healthcare Voucher aims to empower individuals to take control of their health, according to the many citizens who have welcomed the initiative. The Government of Guyana recently officially launched the programme at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre (ACCC) in Liliendaal, Georgetown.

This initiative provides every Guyanese with a \$10,000 Universal Healthcare Voucher. Additionally, the Eye Testing and Spectacles programme, which continues this year, is designed to assist citizens by offering eye tests, screenings and support for obtaining spectacles if needed.

Numerous citizens have underscored the importance of the initiative and highlighted the other programmes they have benefitted from.

Mr Philip Bourne, an elderly man, said:

“I feel good about receiving help to assist me with my health problems.” He mentioned that he also benefitted from the Eye Testing and Spectacles programme and commended the Administration for its efforts to bolster the healthcare sector, adding that he is looking forward to other programmes.

Ms Wendy Johnson, while expressing happiness, said that she cannot wait to use her voucher.

"As a citizen, I feel very happy and excited to have collected my voucher and I know that it will benefit me and all the persons who would have collected this voucher."

Ms Odessa Debarros expressed similar sentiments, while also highlighting the strides that the Government has been making in the health sector.

"For me, in the health sector, health has been doing a good job. Yes, I know there is a bit of room for improvement, but in all of it, they have been doing a good job."

Ms Dawn Pearson, a student at the Health Science Division at the Kingston Annex of the Ministry of Health, underscored the importance of this voucher when it comes to monitoring one's health and early detection of certain diseases. *"It's a great initiative by the*

Government. It would help us to check up on our health. So, whatever the result is, we are preventing diseases from happening."

Mr Clinton Softleigh explained that, apart from the financial relief, the voucher will teach the importance of monitoring one's well-being.

"There are people that are going to be reached, there's a lot of impact that is going to be made. People are going to start taking into consideration how important their health is and how to cherish it," he said, adding, "You don't have to wait for something to happen to take your health seriously. You can actually take the initiative."

The Universal Healthcare Voucher caters for a number of tests that are essential in managing one's health. The general screening blood tests include hemoglobin (hb), lipid profile, liver function, kidney function, urinalysis and thyroid function tests, to name a few.

Health Minister receives courtesy call from IAEA expert

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, recently received a courtesy call from Valerie Cuccia, an expert from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), at his office on Brickdam, Georgetown. The IAEA official was accompanied by a team from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

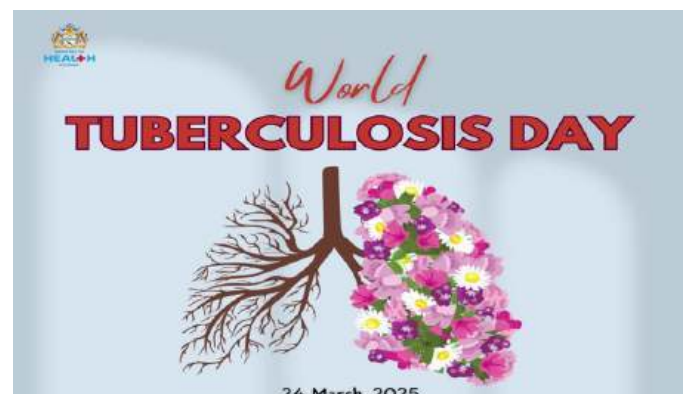
Ms Cuccia is in Guyana to assist in updating the country's Radiation Source Inventory for both health and industrial facilities, which was last updated in 2015.

Newly appointed UNDP Resident

Rep pays courtesy call on Health Minister

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, recently received a courtesy call from the newly appointed United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative, Mr Berdi Berdiyev, at the Ministry's office on Brickdam, Georgetown.

This courtesy call served as an introduction of Mr Berdi to the Minister, following which they held discussions on areas of mutual interest.



MOH staff celebrate Phagwah

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health (MOH), Mr Malcolm Watkins, along with other staff from the Ministry joyfully participated in the Phagwah (Holi) celebrations, held recently at the Ministry's Office in Brickdam, Georgetown.

As part of the celebration, Mr Watkins extended warm Holi greetings to all staff, encouraging everyone to celebrate safely and to enjoy the festivities.



Health Minister welcomes new Peace Corps Director

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, recently welcomed the newly appointed Director of Programme and Training for the Peace Corps, Mr Brian Zoeller, during a courtesy call and brief meeting at his Brickdam office, Georgetown.

The meeting focused on strengthening collaboration between the Ministry of Health and the Peace Corps, particularly in public health training, community health initiatives and capacity building.

Accompanying Mr Zoeller was Programme Manager (Health) of Peace Corps Guyana, Ms Merica George. A key discussion point during the meeting was the proposed two-year extension of the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two entities aimed at furthering health sector development through volunteer-driven projects.

MOH investigating suspected cases of Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with regional authorities, is actively investigating and monitoring a suspected outbreak of Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) in Region Four (Demerara-Mahaica).

HFMD is a contagious viral disease that primarily affects children of primary school age, although individuals of any age group can contract it.

On March 11, an expert team from the Ministry of Health conducted an initial visit to assess the situation and provide necessary support. A follow-up visit was conducted on March 18. Samples have been collected and sent to the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) for confirmation of the pathogen.

Common symptoms of HFMD include fever, sore throat, painful sores or blisters in the mouth, and a rash on the hands, feet and occasionally the buttocks. Symptoms typically appear two to seven days after exposure to an infected person, their bodily secretions (for example, their saliva, blister fluid, or faeces), or contaminated objects and surfaces.

While contagious, HFMD is generally not severe, with most cases being resolved on their own within seven to 10 days. Medical treatment is primarily to relieve pain and fever and prevent dehydration.

To minimize the risk of infection, the Ministry advises the public to practice regular handwashing with soap and water, avoid close contact with individuals who are

exhibiting symptoms, and sanitize and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and shared items.

Individuals, particularly children, showing symptoms of HFMD are strongly encouraged to remain at home until they are no longer contagious. Parents are urged to seek medical attention at the nearest health facility if their

children exhibit signs or symptoms of HFMD, or if the illness persists for more than one week.

The Ministry of Health remains committed to protecting the health and well-being of all citizens and will continue to provide updates as new information becomes available.

Gov't to seek clarity on U.S. restrictions on Cuban healthcare workers



Vice-President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo

The Government of Guyana has expressed its intention to seek clarity on the position of the U.S. Government to expand a visa restriction policy, which targets Cuban officials that are believed to be affiliated with a labour program that seeks to send

Cuban workers overseas, particularly those in the field of healthcare.

The U.S. Government announced the measure recently, when it suggested that the labour export programmes that are run by the Cuban Government “enrich the Cuban regime.” The announcement further went on to state that all who are involved would be deemed complicit in the “exploitation and forced labour” of Cuban workers.

However, Vice President, Dr Bharrat Jagdeo, has assured that Government is working with the U.S. State Department to come to a fair solution for all involved.

“I can assure you that there is a regional as well as national engagement with the U.S. State Department on these matters. We want to have Cuban professionals work in our health system, they have been an invaluable support to our health system, but we also want to ensure that they have free choice. This is something that we are working [on] with the U.S. Government,” Dr Jagdeo said.

The healthcare system in Guyana, and by extension the Caribbean, has significantly benefited from the assistance of Cuban healthcare workers over the years.

Several other Caribbean Heads of Government have already shown support for the Cuban healthcare workers, citing the significant impact the workers have had, especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Vice President Jagdeo noted that Government is confident in the diplomatic approach they will take with the U.S.

“We do not do diplomacy in the public [domain]. I believe we have [a] strong engagement with the State Department that would allow this matter to be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties. That is how we will approach it,” Dr Jagdeo said.

Reducing maternal mortality via integrated healthcare methods in Guyana

While the world continues to grapple with the issue of maternal mortality, Guyana is seriously working towards addressing this serious health issue.

Recent research around the world identifies haemorrhage and hypertensive disorders, including pre-eclampsia, as among the leading causes of death among pregnant

women, and underscores the need for high-quality, evidence-based pregnancy and post-pregnancy care.

Work is being done towards reducing maternal deaths in Guyana, with increased focus on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of eliminating all avoidable maternal deaths by 2030.

Health infrastructure and strengthening of services is one of the initiatives in Guyana. Construction of the Paediatric and Maternal Hospital on the East Coast of Demerara in Region Four (Demerara-Mahaica) and renovations to the Skeldon Regional Hospital in Region Six (East Berbice-Corentyne), are a few examples of commitment to the same.

The hospitals will provide specialty services to pregnant individuals and children, including delivery, post-delivery and prenatal services.

External assistance by institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is also important in the health networks and healthcare professional capacity building.

Notwithstanding these initiatives, challenges have yet to be overcome. The high infant and maternal death rates relative to other countries within the region still persist. Inadequate access to quality services in rural districts is still one of the biggest challenges.

In order to overcome these, emphasis must continue to be placed on the enhancement of postnatal, skilled births, and antenatal services. The “three delays” model (minimising delays in seeking, arriving at facilities and obtaining quality services) can guide interventions to improve mother outcomes.

Furthermore, underlying medical conditions such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), malaria and diabetes need to be treated, as these can complicate pregnancy and raise risks.

Guyana’s commitment to ending mother-to-child transmission of HIV by 2025 is a step in the right direction. The Government must continue its integrated approach to maternal health, which encompasses both direct obstetric causes and more general preventive measures, to allow women to receive full care across different stages of life.

With external help, and by implementing evidence-based measures, there is a chance to carry forward the progress toward reducing maternal deaths and promoting the health and wellness of all people.

World Health Day 2025, centred on the theme of maternal and new-born health, was a timely reminder of just how critical and pressing the work is.

New Lima Hospital to provide advanced critical care -- Health Minister



The Lima Regional Hospital in Region Two (Pomeroon-Supenaam) is scheduled to be completed by year end. It will offer essential medical services and have the necessary facilities to treat critically ill patients.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, has announced that the Lima Regional Hospital in Region Two (Pomeroon-Supenaam), which is currently under construction, will be fully equipped to manage critically ill patients.

During a recent visit to the region, Dr Anthony inspected the progress of the construction works. The hospital is expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

The Minister told members of the media that the facility will offer essential medical services, including a 24-hour laboratory, ensuring that when tests are done, the results will be available shortly after.

Additionally, the hospital will feature an advanced imaging suite, offering digital x-rays, ultrasounds, and for the first time on the Essequibo Coast, a computed

tomography (CT) scan machine. This marks a significant upgrade in healthcare services for the region.

He noted that the hospital is expected to have an on-site radiology unit, allowing for immediate interpretation of x-rays and diagnosis. The imaging platform will also be connected to the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), enabling consultants to provide second opinions remotely.

“We are also working with a company to integrate AI (artificial Intelligence) technology, which will perform an initial reading of x-rays to help determine normal and abnormal cases,” the Minister added.

Medical services

The hospital will also feature a dental department and hearing and eye testing services. Notably, hearing aids, previously costing \$65,000, will now be provided free of charge by the Government.

The second floor of the hospital will house two operating theatres, allowing for routine surgeries to be conducted on-site. A birthing suite will also be built, offering multiple delivery stations for expectant mothers, along with a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) to care for premature babies.

Patient comfort

Unlike the open-ward system at the Suddie Public Hospital, also in Region Two, the Lima facility will offer 75 inpatient beds, arranged in semi-private rooms with five beds per room. Each unit will have its own toilet and bath, ensuring greater comfort and convenience for patients.

Other modern features of the hospital include full air-conditioning, swipe card access for security and privacy, oxygen supply built into the walls and electronic patient information displayed outside each room.

Dr Anthony also noted that the new hospital will be fully digitised, enhancing patient record management and healthcare delivery.

Community impact

In addition to improving healthcare access, the Lima Regional Hospital will create numerous employment opportunities in various fields. The hospital will have a laundry department, kitchen and specialised medical unit which will require trained professionals.

“This will be a modern facility with top-tier amenities, ensuring quality patient care for all Essequibians,” the Minister said. He urged the community to care the new hospital, emphasising that it represents a major step forward for healthcare in the region.



Digital health strategy being developed - Health Minister

The Ministry of Health is advancing efforts to modernise healthcare delivery through the development of a comprehensive digital health strategy.

Minister of Health, Honorable Dr Frank Anthony, made this disclosure following the contract-signing for the implementation of the electronic health records system.

Dr Anthony noted that officials have come up with a digital health strategy for the Ministry and this has been drafted.

The initiative he said is being supported with resources from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) through which the establishment of a digital health department was facilitated within the ministry.

“We have started to build a digital health department within the ministry, and we have a number of consultants that we’ve been able to hire, working with us,” he said. “So they would be able to oversee some of the things and how it’s being rolled out.”

Dr Anthony said the transition towards a more digital and efficient health system is a crucial step in improving healthcare services. “We hope that with the partners having gone through this very lengthy process, that our partners will be able to deliver [a] quality product and make sure that we are able to do this in a timely manner,” he said.

The Government has also been collaborating with the British Government on various initiatives related to digital health.

The Minister said there now exists a roadmap of where they want to go in relation to digitisation over the next few years. Looking ahead, the Ministry is also focusing on integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into the health sector and work is ongoing to develop an AI health strategy for the country.

The development of the digital health strategy marks a significant step toward the modernisation of Guyana’s healthcare system, ensuring improved service delivery and efficiency.

New regional hospitals to be staffed with 8,000 persons - Vice President

As the Government continues to transform healthcare in Guyana, it has been revealed that the 12 new regional hospitals that are being constructed will be staffed with 8,000 persons.

This was announced by Vice-President, Dr Bharrat Jagdeo, during a recent address to the thousands of persons who gathered at Babu John, Corentyne, Berbice to commemorate the life of the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) founder and former President His Excellency Dr Cheddi Jagan.

“Every group of Guyanese, regardless of their race, has seen that the PPP/C stands by its word, that our word is our bond, and when we make these promises for the next term, you bet they will be delivered,” said Dr Jagdeo.

“That we’d have the best healthcare in anywhere in the world, because of the 12 hospitals that we’re building

now, we’d hire 8,000 people to make them functional right across this country, including specialists,” he added.

His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali had announced in February that, by 2028, the Government will have constructed and operationalised 12 state-of-the-art regional hospitals. This is in keeping with the objective of delivering world-class healthcare services.

The hospitals will possess 24-hour accident and emergency services, 24-hour laboratories, a suite of imaging services, including ultrasound, digital x-ray and computed tomography (CT) scans, along with operation theatres and more.

Alongside these major facilities, the Government has also injected significant investments to improve healthcare delivery for residents residing in hinterland communities.

Photo of the Month

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, recently visited the construction site of the Nursing School and Training Complex in Region Two (Pomeroon-Supenaam).

Upon completion, this state-of-the-art facility, valued at \$881 million, will significantly enhance practical training for the Ministry's hybrid nursing programme.



Health Minister distributes Universal Health Voucher to Windsor Centre residents



As part of a recent visit to Region Two (Pomeroon-Supenaam), Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, distributed the newly launched Universal Health Voucher to residents of the Windsor Centre community on the Essequibo Coast.

Valued at \$10,000, the voucher provides access to a range of subsidised laboratory tests for both children and adults. Launched on March 15, the programme is designed to focus on early detection and the prevention of health issues.

During his address at the Windsor Castle Health Centre, Dr Anthony emphasised the Government's commitment to promoting health and wellness through various free or subsidised screening and testing services.

"We don't want people to get sick, and one way of doing of doing that is testing yourself so you will know what problems you have," he said.

In his appeal to parents and guardians, the Minister explained that age-appropriate tests were selected for children under the Universal Health Voucher programme to facilitate the early detection of diseases unique to that age group.

"What we have done is to make the tests age appropriate because diseases that affect older people or adults are not necessarily the same thing that would affect children," the Minister explained.

The children's health voucher includes laboratory tests, such as, complete blood count, kidney function, thyroid function, and hemoglobin electrophoresis, among others. The adult vouchers cover tests include prostate-specific antigen, fecal occult blood test, HbA1c (a blood test that is used to diagnose type two diabetes) and urine analysis.

The vouchers can be used at various private laboratories and health facilities across the country.

Dr Anthony also encouraged eligible individuals to take advantage of additional vouchers for eye testing, spectacles and cervical cancer screening, which are available at various health facilities throughout the regions.

While urging the public to make full use of the voucher programmes, the Minister also called for community engagement to ensure the success of these initiatives.

With a \$5 billion allocation, the Universal Health Voucher programme aims to provide testing for at least 500,000 individuals countrywide.

20th Chinese Medical Team extends support to residents of remote communities

Through 'Healthy Village' initiative



The "Healthy Village" initiative in Malali in Region 10 (Upper Demerara-Berbice).

A man, who was left with severe nerve pain after undergoing a surgery to address a brain tumour, received much needed relief through the "Healthy Village" initiative, which was launched by the 20th Chinese Medical Team, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs.

Malali Village in Region 10 (Upper Demerara-Upper Berbice), was recently the first of many to benefit from the initiative, and over 30 citizens took advantage.

A member of the 20th Chinese Medical Team, who is also a traditional medicine doctor, Dr Ben Ji, reflected on the defining moments of his outreach. He treated a patient who had lost his eyesight due to a brain tumor. After his operation, the man had suffered from extensive abnormal nerve sensations in the back of the head, neck and all four limbs.

The sensations were accompanied by frequent pain and a burning sensation on the skin. Taking into account the medical conditions, Dr Ji recommended acupuncture treatment.

Initially, the patient, who was unfamiliar with traditional Chinese medicine, and was understandably nervous about acupuncture, declined the offer. However, after persuasion from the medical staff, he finally agreed.

A remarkable shift occurred just after one acupuncture session, as the patient reported a noticeable relief in the pain and burning sensation on his skin.

Dr Ji said the long-standing medical cooperation between China and Guyana has resulted in Guyanese becoming more knowledgeable about traditional Chinese medicine. However, there is still room to expand this knowledge, and that objective is being carried out, especially under this new initiative, he explained

"Admittedly, the effect of a single treatment is limited. To achieve lasting results, long-term and standardised treatment is essential, and there is still much work for us to do in this regard," said Dr Ji.

The "Healthy Village" initiative was sprouted from a meeting between the 20th Chinese Medical Team and the Minister of Amerindian Affairs, Honourable Ms Pauline Campbell-Sukhai. An agreement was reached to allow the medical team to provide free medical services in some of Guyana's remote villages.

The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs subsequently proposed a list of 15 villages, scattered across three regions.

The 11-member 20th Chinese Medical Team covered a wide range of specialties, including general surgery, ophthalmology, orthopedics, obstetrics and gynecology, nephrology, anesthesia and pain medicine, burns and plastic surgery, traditional Chinese medicine, radiology and pathology.

Besides offering consultations for diseases within these specialties, the team also provided services, including blood pressure and blood glucose measurement, as well as traditional Chinese medicine treatments such as acupuncture and tuina.

Leader of the 20th Chinese Medical Team, Dr Bob Du, on behalf of his colleagues, presented practical medical supplies such as sphygmomanometers, medical masks and hand sanitizers to the Village Head.



Members of the 20th Chinese Medical Team, who are part of the "Healthy Village" initiative, with residents of Malali.

Reflecting on the event, Dr Du pointed out that, over the past six months since their arrival, the medical team members have witnessed first-hand the efforts being made by the Guyana Government to improve local medical conditions and elevate the standard of healthcare.

Dr Du expressed confidence that, given time, Guyana's healthcare system would achieve similar success as China's. He said the free medical consultation marks a promising start to this series of outreach activities and stands as yet another exemplary model of medical cooperation between China and Guyana.

In the coming six months, the 20th Chinese Medical Team will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and the Ministry of Health to sustain this meaningful initiative.

GPHC observes World Glaucoma Week with public awareness, health education booth



The team at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) Eye Clinic.

Under the theme, "United for a Glaucoma Free World," Guyana joined the rest of the world in observing World Glaucoma Week 2025 from March 9-15, 2025. The theme focused on bringing communities worldwide together to fight against glaucoma blindness.

To bring awareness to this important topic, the optometrists and staff of the Eye Clinic at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) hosted a Glaucoma Awareness Booth, which provided public awareness and health education to members of the public. Visitors were given eye health educational material, and optometrists were able to answer their questions about glaucoma and other eye diseases.

GPHC Optometrist, Dr Janelle Harry, explained that, at the booth, the optometrists were able to highlight the causes of glaucoma and how it is treated, among other key areas. She noted that they also gave out appointments for screening.

Dr Harry pointed out that because of the wide spread of health facilities around the country, cases of glaucoma are caught in the early stages, allowing patients to receive the eye health care they need.

"So, we're not having persons actually waiting until years upon years, like maybe ten years, without an eye test," she said. Alongside this, she explained that they host outreaches where they try to go to each region to bring awareness to these diseases.

Ophthalmologist Consultant at the GPHC, Dr Damonien Lamy Badette, stated that the hospital offers comprehensive eye tests for all of its patients. This includes a measured eye pressure test.

She pointed out that one of the main concepts of glaucoma is that it is a chronic problem. By definition, glaucoma refers to a collection of eye problems that damage the optic nerve, typically as a result of elevated intraocular pressure (IOP). It is termed as the 'silent thief of sight, owing to its subtle nature, where symptoms arrive after significant vision loss.

"That's why we always advise anybody that we encounter, we ask that question, 'Do you have anybody that blood related to you that had a diagnosis of glaucoma?' Then we advise them," said Dr Badette.

She said further that patients will not know they have glaucoma until they are tested, as there are no signs. "So, you need to come forward for glaucoma screening. As we age, there's a risk also to develop glaucoma, and as a young person, if you have a trauma, you know, injury to your eyes, you can also be at risk for glaucoma," she explained.

The most modern piece of equipment offered to patients at the GPHC is the Optical Coherence Tomography (OTC) machine, a non-invasive imaging tool used by

ophthalmologists to create detailed, cross-sectional images of the retina and optic nerve, aiding in the early detection and diagnosis of various eye conditions.

At the GPHC Eye Clinic, all are welcome if they have a referral letter from their private doctor, a health centre, or another hospital where they are a patient. The referral letter can be taken directly to GPHC's Eye Clinic.

Canadian-based company launches medical foundation in Guyana

Chirosyn Canada Inc., a Canadian-based, Guyanese-owned pharmaceutical company, marked its 15th anniversary of excellence in medicine in Guyana with the launch of the Dr Cheekoori's Medicine Foundation.

The announcement was made at the Cardiology and Endocrinology symposium, held recently at the Pegasus Corporate Centre in Georgetown on Sunday.

The newly established foundation aims to support Guyanese facing financial challenges in accessing medical treatment. It will also play a pivotal role in expanding access to a wider range of medications, particularly in emergency situations. The foundation intends to collaborate with Guyana's existing healthcare systems to enhance medical accessibility across the country.

In addition to the foundation's launch, Chirosyn Canada outlined its plans to expand operations in Guyana. The company intends to work closely with the Ministry of Health and local agencies to align with the Guyana Government's medicine initiatives.

Chirosyn Canada began distributing pharmaceutical products in Guyana in 2010 before expanding into pharmaceutical manufacturing. The company is owned by Ms Tarlika Persaud, a genomics specialist with a Master's Degree in Chemistry, and Dr Sreedhar Cheekoori, an organic chemist with several medicinal patents.

Ms Persaud notably developed a novel method for detecting metabolic disorders in newborns at McMaster Hospital in Canada before jointly venturing into the pharmaceutical field with her husband.

The symposium, organised in collaboration with the Medical Council and Pharmacy Council of Guyana, attracted over 300 doctors and pharmacists from across the country. Among the distinguished speakers was renowned Cardiologist, Dr Vivian Rambihar, who was recently inducted into Canada's Walk of Fame for his contributions to the field.

Dr Rambihar shared insights on new theories in cardiology, particularly unpredictability within the field.

Other notable speakers included Cardiologist at the University Health Network (UHN) in Canada, Dr Sherryn Rambihar; Psychiatrist at West Park Healthcare in Toronto, Canada, Dr Nadira Rambihar; Paediatrician from the University of the West Indies (UWI), Dr Gaitree Satram; and Chairperson of the Guyana Pharmacy Council, Dr Karishma Jeeboo. Their academic presentations were well received by attendees, further enriching the medical discourse at the event.

The launch of the Dr Cheekoori's Medicine Foundation and Chirosyn Canada's expansion plans signal a significant step forward in improving healthcare accessibility and pharmaceutical innovation in Guyana.

Mental health a growing public health issue - CARPHA

In the Caribbean in particular, mental health is influenced by a range of socio-economic factors, cultural attitudes and the availability of mental health services.

Socio-economic factors, such as poverty and unemployment contribute significantly to stress, anxiety

and depression, while natural disasters, epidemics/pandemics can also lead to trauma, displacement and long-lasting psychological effects.

The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), in collaboration with the Government of Barbados through

their Ministry of Health and Wellness, will host the 69th Health Research Conference from May 7-9, 2025. The three-day conference, which gives delegates a platform to network, share research and insights, will take place at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre, Two Mile Hill, St Michael, Barbados.

The conference is the Caribbean's premier gathering of health research professionals. Over 200 participants will benefit from more than 160 oral and poster presentations, as well as concurrent sessions. At the conclusion of the conference, health researchers will be recognised for their outstanding contributions to public health in the region.



Executive Director of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), Dr Lisa Indar.

Executive Director of CARPHA, Dr Lisa Indar, speaking at the launch for the event pointed out that mental health touches every one, whether personally, through loved ones, or within communities. "It impacts how people relate to others, make decisions and handle stress," she said.

"People's ability to live fulfilling lives often depends on their mental health. This makes protecting and restoring mental

health of immediate concern to public health professionals with increasing impact, and especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic," said Dr Indar.

In his opening remarks, Chief Medical Officer of Barbados, Dr Kenneth George, underscored the role of CARPHA in public health research.

"CARPHA has been instrumental in supporting scientific and public health research for several decades. Through

rigorous data analysis, research and dissemination of information, CARPHA continues to shape the health policy agenda, not only within our region, but on the international stage as well," he said.

In addition to the research agenda, Dr George said CARPHA is central to the provision of technical assistance to the 26 Member States of the region in areas including surveillance, epidemiology, port health, vector control, non-communicable diseases (NCD) and reference laboratory services.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Wellness in Barbados, Mr Wayne Marshall, delivering an address on behalf of his Senator, Honourable Jerome Walcott, noted that Barbados last hosted this "prestigious" conference in 2013. "And we are thrilled to once again bring together a diverse group of health professionals, researchers, and policymakers from across the region and the globe," he said.

Mr Marshall said the collaboration with CARPHA ensures that the 2025 Annual Health Research Conference and its pre-conference events, including meetings and training workshops, will be a platform for sharing groundbreaking research and clinical findings that can significantly influence public health policies.

He expressed gratitude to CARPHA, sponsors and all the participants who will make this conference a resounding success, while also calling for everyone to work together to elevate the discourse on mental health and other critical public health issues, thereby fostering a healthier future for all.

The conference will be attended by Chief Medical Officers (CMOs), researchers, physicians, nurses, psychologists, environmental health officers and other public health officials from across the Caribbean region, Latin America, North America and Europe. Local, regional and international organisations and companies will also be exhibiting and presenting their programmes, innovations, products and services.

Health Ministry advances adolescent health strategies with regional, int'l support

The Ministry of Health's Adolescent Health Department is making significant strides in updating and implementing health strategies tailored to adolescents, aligning with national and regional policies governing Guyana, Latin America and the Caribbean.

During a recent episode of the Health Matters Programme, Adolescent Health Coordinator Ms Cilandell Glen highlighted the department's collaborative efforts with the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Ms Glen revealed that one of the key projects undertaken by the department is the revision of the Adolescent Health Strategy, last implemented in 2007. With assistance from PAHO and UNICEF, work commenced in 2018 to develop an updated strategy, which is expected to be finalized and implemented from 2025 to 2030.

"We know that we have the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and this strategy aligns with those objectives. By 2030, we will have a new and comprehensive adolescent health strategy in place," Ms Glen stated.

In addition, the department has been working on the Adolescent Health Pregnancy Prevention Strategy, a WHO initiative designed to combat adolescent pregnancy rates. Through a grant from UNFPA, referred to as the Indian Grant, Guyana has been able to adopt international standards and guidelines for delivering healthcare services to adolescents.

Ms Glen noted that Guyana is the second country in Latin America and the Caribbean to adopt this framework, following Jamaica. The draft strategy is expected to be officially adopted soon.

Although the Pregnancy Prevention Strategy has not been formally launched, the department has already begun training healthcare workers to ensure its successful implementation.

"In order for us to achieve positive health outcomes for adolescents, we need guiding documents, and this strategy serves that purpose," Ms Glen explained. The document outlines six key standards, including collaboration with community leaders, health promotion and the delivery of adolescent-focused services.

Meanwhile, Acting Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Officer, Ms Shawina Davis, provided insight into the department's core initiatives. These include the



Adolescent Health Coordinator Ms Cilandell Glen

adolescent health and wellness clinic, the adolescent parent and support group, and the community support group.

Currently, approximately 100 healthcare workers have been trained in adolescent health services, and 75 clinics across the regions have been designated as adolescent-friendly sites where young people can access vital health information.

"We also have our Adolescent Antenatal Clinic, where we focus on teen mothers, ensuring they receive the necessary prenatal care. Additionally, these young mothers benefit from reintegration support to return to school if they wish," Ms Davis said.

The Health Matters Programme also underscored the importance of peer educators in delivering health education. According to Focal Point Officer, Ms Wendy Seepersaud, trained peer educators visit schools, churches and health fairs to conduct awareness sessions on critical topics such as drug abuse, nutrition, teenage pregnancy, dental and eye care, among others.

"We are currently seeking individuals between the ages of 17 and 20, who are neither working nor studying, to visit the Adolescent Health Department for training as peer health educators," said Ms Seepersaud. Interested persons can also contact us at 223-5310 to sign up.

She further emphasized the role of school health clubs, which have been established in each administrative region. These clubs train students and teachers to deliver health-related messages within schools, fostering a culture of awareness and proactive healthcare among young people.

Ms Seepersaud encouraged parents to support their children to engage in healthy activities, ensuring their overall well-being and development into healthy adults.

The Ministry of Health remains committed to advancing adolescent health initiatives through strategic planning, international collaboration and community engagement, ultimately enhancing healthcare access and outcomes for young people in Guyana.

Regional Nursing Body focuses on better health outcomes through quality management



Policy and clinical management professionals during a working session.

The Regional Nursing Body (RNB) is on a trajectory to improve health outcomes for the people of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) through harmonising standards, training, and assessment tools for nurses.

This was the focus of four days of discussions among stakeholders in the nursing profession, which took place recently at the CARICOM Secretariat's Headquarters in Georgetown, Guyana.

Some 31 policy and clinical management professionals participated in the 53rd Joint Meeting of the Executive and Education Committees and the 22nd Meeting of the Practice Committee of the RNB, under the chairmanship of Chief Nursing Officer from the Ministry of Health, Wellness and Religious Affairs of Grenada, Ms Nester Edwards.

In her address at the meeting, Director of Human Development at the CARICOM Secretariat, Ms Helen Royer, emphasised the unwavering commitment of stakeholders to advancing quality in nursing, underscoring the dedication that is evident in the nursing community:

"The Regional Nursing Body discussed a number of policies and tools aimed at significantly improving the level of care provided by nurses in the region. The body continued the work towards completing the revision of the Caribbean Standards for Nursing and Midwifery

Education and Practice to ensure that these standards were harmonised throughout the region and remained consistent with international policies and guidelines," said Ms Royer.

"This would ensure that nursing and midwifery professionals were better equipped to serve the population of the community," she added.

Deputy Programme Manager for Health Sector Development at the CARICOM Secretariat, Dr Serena Bender-Pelswijk, underscored the integral role of these discussions in developing and refining the tools and policies used to advance the nursing profession in the region.

"Participants are discussing the development of standards for the education, practice and regulation of the 'Advanced Practice Nurse' considering the expansion of the specialties in the nursing profession in response to the evolving needs of the healthcare systems in the region," she said.

The meeting also benefitted from a World Health Organisation (WHO) presentation on the Human Resources for Resilient Health Systems, Caribbean Roadmap 2025.

The RNB, as the advisory body on matters related to the education, practice and regulation of nurses and midwives, plays a crucial role in improving nursing and its contribution to health care in the region.

It also provides advisory services to Member States on request and, as mandated by the Conference of Ministers responsible for health, ensures that nursing standards are constantly evolving and improving.

The RNB identifies the need for basic, post-basic and continuing nursing education programmes that align with current trends in nursing and health care in the region.

Among other strategic objectives, it also promotes developing, implementing, and evaluating quality assurance programmes in nursing and health care.

Women urged to prioritise their healthcare



Resident Postgraduate Year Four (PGY IV), Dr Janeisa Klass.

For International Women's Day 2025, Resident Postgraduate Year Four (PGY IV), Dr Janeisa Klass urged women to prioritise their health, as regular check-ups and self-care are vital.

She said that when women are informed about their health needs, they are able to make better decisions about their health needs for themselves and others.

Dr Klass noted that at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology of the Georgetown Public Hospital

Corporation (GPHC), women can get screening for cervical cancer and breast cancer, as well as access to contraceptives and family planning. "Because health is not just the absence of a disease, but is a state of complete physical, emotional and social well-being," she said.

Dr Klass encouraged women to advocate for themselves and to encourage others to do so as well.

In an effort to advance women's healthcare in Guyana, the GPHC collaborated with the U.S.-based Northwell Health to offer advanced training in urogynaecology. This was done in December 2024.

Urogynaecology is an essential and often neglected medical field. The initiative enhances access to these critical services in Guyana.

In February, Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, had noted that the Government has made significant investments in improving lives, specifically in the health sector.

Speaking specifically on women, Dr Anthony had emphasised that the Government has been focused on the two main cancers that affect women locally: breast cancer and cervical cancer. Additionally, he noted that they are providing vaccines that help to prevent the latter.



Who is eligible for the **Universal Health Voucher**?

ALL Guyanese, adults and children are eligible for the **Universal Health Voucher**.





Letter to the Editor:

\$100,000 newborn cash grant provides much-needed relief

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express my sincere delight and appreciation for the Government's \$100,000 cash grant for newborn babies.

This initiative is a game-changer for many families across our country, and a step in the right direction towards fostering a brighter future for our youngest citizens.

It can be a struggle for parents to make ends meet, particularly in those crucial first months when the expenses for a newborn can be overwhelming.

This cash grant will provide much-needed financial relief, allowing parents to afford basic necessities such as diapers, formula, medical check-ups, and other essentials that contribute to the health and well-being of their babies.

Beyond immediate financial support, this initiative has significant long-term social and economic benefits.

By giving families a helping hand at the very start of their children's lives, we are investing in a healthier, stronger, and more secure future for our nation.

Parents who are less burdened by financial stress can focus on providing a nurturing environment, leading to better early childhood development.

Additionally, this programme will help boost local businesses, as parents will spend this money within their communities, supporting small retailers, pharmacies, and service providers.

Editor, in my view, this move by the current Government demonstrates a clear commitment to the well-being of Guyanese families and it shows that real progress is being made to improve the lives of our people.

I feel confident that this initiative will remain a staple of our country's social policies, and that we will continue to see more programmes aimed at uplifting the most vulnerable members of our society.

Congratulations to the Government for taking this positive step, and I encourage them to keep prioritising the well-being of our citizens.

Yours truly,

Sharon McDonald

(Guyana Chronicle.)