

# HEALTH Record

## Pinktober 2025

Pgs 16 & 19

**Guyana intensifies efforts to eliminate filaria with drug distribution campaign**  
pg. 1

**38 graduate as Patient Care Assistants in Region Five**  
pg. 15

**Expanded opportunities for newly graduated Pharmacists**  
pg. 9

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# HEALTH Record

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# Guyana intensifies efforts to eliminate filaria with drug distribution campaign

By Shabana Shaw

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), has launched the 2025 phase of Guyana's national campaign to eliminate lymphatic filariasis (filaria), a mosquito-borne disease that has impacted Guyanese communities for

more than a century.

The official launch was held on October 31 on the tarmac of the National Cultural Centre in Georgetown, marking a renewed national effort toward achieving a filariasis-free Guyana by 2030.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, underscored the importance of this initiative, describing it as a pivotal milestone in Guyana's pursuit of the WHO's disease elimination targets.

"This morning, we continue a journey that began many years ago; a journey to rid our nation of a disease that has caused pain, disfigurement and suffering for generations," Minister Anthony said. "We now have the science, the medicines and the global support to finish this work once and for all."

Significant progress has already been made, with eight of the country's ten regions recording infection rates below the one percent elimination threshold established by WHO. The current campaign will therefore focus on the remaining two regions, Region Three (Essequibo Islands-West Demerara) and Region Four (Demerara-Mahaica), to achieve complete national

elimination.

Lymphatic filariasis is transmitted through bites from infected mosquitoes, including species of *Culex*, *Anopheles* and *Aedes*. When mosquitoes bite an infected person, they can ingest microscopic worms (microfilariae), which are then transmitted to others through subsequent bites.

These worms inhabit the human lymphatic system and, over time, can cause severe swelling of the limbs and other body parts, leading to conditions such as lymphoedema or elephantiasis, commonly known as "bigfoot" and hydrocele. These conditions can also affect the breasts and genital organs, leading to physical disability, social stigma and economic hardship.

Through extensive research and successful field interventions, the Health Ministry has identified mass drug administration (MDA) as the most effective method for breaking the transmission cycle.

The MDA strategy involves distributing a combination of a triple-drug therapy, Ivermectin, Diethylcarbamazine and Albendazole (known as IDA), which together eliminate the worms from the human body. Once treated, individuals no longer serve as reservoirs of infection, effectively stopping further transmission.

More than 639 trained personnel, including pill distributors and supervisors, will conduct house-to-house visits throughout Regions Three and Four. These teams will ensure that residents receive accurate information about the program and take the prescribed medications.

The Ministry of Health, together with PAHO/WHO, will provide ongoing monitoring and verification of the campaign's progress through daily reporting and field supervision.

“Our success depends not only on science, but on people. We must reach every home, talk to every family, and ensure that everyone understands why taking these tablets matters. This is how we protect each other and our nation,” Minister Anthony said.

Guyana's fight against filaria dates back to the early 1900s, with past interventions, including the use of Diethylcarbamazine in table salt, yielding partial success. IDA has proven to be far more effective when administered correctly.

The Minister reaffirmed the Government's goal of achieving complete elimination of filaria by 2030, highlighting that Guyana is now closer than ever to eradicating the disease.

Beyond lymphatic filariasis, Dr Anthony disclosed that the Ministry of Health is advancing its broader vision to eliminate several other infectious

diseases, including chagas disease, leishmaniasis, leprosy, hepatitis C and malaria.

The Health Minister noted that the elimination of these long-standing diseases will free resources to address emerging health threats linked to climate change and global travel.

“As we fight these ancient diseases, we must free up space to deal with new and emerging infections. COVID-19 showed us the importance of preparedness. We must build resilient systems to respond swiftly to whatever comes next,” he said.

Recent regional training sessions with PAHO experts have strengthened leprosy elimination strategies, with no new cases reported among children, an encouraging indicator of progress.

In the fight against hepatitis C, treatment costs have been reduced from over U.S.\$1,500 to under U.S.\$100 per patient through PAHO-negotiated access, enabling free treatment across the country.

“Let's work hard together over the next few weeks to make this programme the most successful in our country's

history,” said the Minister.

Country Representative of PAHO/WHO, Dr Kim Dickson, said the current campaign forms part of the PAHO Elimination Initiative, a regional strategy aimed at ending more than 30 communicable diseases and related conditions in the Americas by 2030. This innovative, integrated and sustainable approach seeks to accelerate progress in improving the quality of life for people and communities across the region.

Dr Dickson reaffirmed the organisation's unwavering support to the Ministry of Health and the people of Guyana.

“Our goal is simple yet profound, to improve the quality of life for people and communities. And we know that this is possible. The Americas have proven that elimination is achievable when we work together. Today, Guyana stands once again as a trailblazer in public health,” she said.

Campaign Coordinator, Dr Annastacia Sampson, explained that the national launch is more than the start of a public health exercise, saying



it represents the nation's steadfast commitment to ending a disease that continues to burden Guyanese for generations.

“Let this launch serve as a rallying call to action for every citizen and every community in Regions Three and Four. Together, we can break the cycle of transmission and achieve a Guyana free of lymphatic filariasis,” she said.

The Health Ministry has urged all eligible residents in Regions Three and Four to fully support the national filaria elimination campaign. Children under two years of age, pregnant women, and

individuals who are severely ill are exempted from taking the medication, but all other eligible persons are encouraged to participate.

Meanwhile, Guyana's malaria programme is transitioning from control to elimination, with intensified interventions in endemic Regions One (Barima-Waini), Seven (Cuyuni-Mazaruni), Eight (Potaro-Siparuni), and Nine (Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo).

Guyana has long demonstrated leadership in disease elimination, being among the first countries to adopt the

integrated approach targeting several priority diseases, including lymphatic filariasis, canine rabies, and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).



# Guyana prioritises cancer care with expanded access to prevention, treatment initiatives

As Guyana joins with the rest of the world to observe Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the Ministry of Health has reaffirmed its commitment to transforming cancer care in Guyana through strategic investments in prevention, early detection and treatment.

Speaking at the Guyana Cancer Society Fundraiser in Georgetown on October 19, Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, highlighted the nation's focused efforts on three of the most prevalent cancers affecting Guyanese: breast cancer, cervical cancer and prostate cancer. Notably, Guyana is also preparing to expand its efforts to address anorectal cancer in 2026.

“We are on a trajectory to change the course of cancer care in Guyana,” the Minister said. “With better access, stronger partnerships, and increased public engagement, we believe Guyana can eliminate some forms of cancer, starting with cervical cancer.”

Breast cancer remains the most common cancer among women in Guyana and, in response, the Ministry has significantly expanded access to mammography services, previously only available at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC).

The Health Minister said additional mammography machines are operational at the Public Hospital Suddie, Essequibo Coast, the Linden

Hospital Complex, and the GPHC. This expansion is critical to ensuring women across the country can access early and potentially life-saving diagnostics.

Cervical cancer, largely preventable through Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccines, is the second most common cancer in women. Guyana has now upgraded from a quadrivalent HPV vaccine to Gardasil 9, aligning with global standards in the U.S., Canada and Europe.

Thanks to a partnership with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), vaccines costing U.S. \$360 per dose in other regions are provided free of charge to Guyanese citizens for



Participants at the Breast Cancer Awareness Month event.

just U.S. \$15 per dose cost to the Government.

Vaccines are now being offered to children aged nine to 15 (both boys and girls) and women aged 16 to 45. In addition, the Government's Cervical Cancer Screening Programme allows screening at private laboratories, using vouchers worth \$8,000.

Over 15,000 vouchers have been distributed in 2025, with 18 percent of tested individuals requiring follow-up care, underscoring the importance of early detection.

Despite cultural barriers that deter men from routine health checks, Dr Anthony is urging men to take advantage of the Universal Health Voucher valued at \$10,000, which includes a Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test for just \$4,000, fully covered by the voucher. To date, over 6,000 PSA tests have been conducted in 2025, with approximately 1,000 showing elevated levels. Men with elevated results are referred for free biopsies and follow-up care.

The Health Ministry is actively

working to launch of a nationwide anorectal cancer screening programme in 2026, aimed at early detection and improved patient outcomes. To support more accurate and timely diagnoses, efforts are also underway to expand training for medical professionals and upgrade diagnostic equipment.

In addition, a new laboratory dedicated to histochemistry and cancer marker testing is being established. This facility will play a vital role in enabling personalised treatment plans tailored to each patient's specific cancer profile.

Another significant enhancement includes the introduction of intraoperative frozen section diagnostics, which will allow surgeons to perform real-time tissue analysis during operations, improving the precision and effectiveness of surgical interventions. Minister Anthony also stated that a key milestone on the horizon is the construction of Guyana's first National Oncology Centre, developed in collaboration with the U.S.-based Mount Sinai Health System.

This cutting-edge facility will offer advanced diagnostic services alongside comprehensive chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatment options. Serving as a central hub for specialized oncology care, the centre will be staffed by a team of highly trained professionals and represents a significant advancement in the country's efforts to strengthen cancer care and treatment.

While the Health Ministry is proud of the progress made, public cooperation remains essential. The Minister urged citizens to get screened regularly, take advantage of free vaccination and testing programmes, and help promote awareness and behaviour change within communities.

"Let us aim not just to treat cancer, but to eliminate it. Together, we can make Guyana a regional leader in cancer care," he said.

Also present at the event was President of the Guyana Cancer Society, Mr Sharir Chan.

# Health Minister highlights advances in dental care, infrastructure at convention



Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, on October 5 attended the Guyana Dental Convention 2025, an annual gathering of dental professionals, educators and health leaders aimed at advancing oral health care and strengthening dental services across Guyana.

The convention brought together practitioners from both the public and

private sectors to discuss innovations in dental technology, patient care and preventive oral health strategies. It also served as a platform for sharing research findings and exploring ways to enhance access to quality dental services nationwide.

In his address, Minister Anthony commended the dedication and hard work of dental professionals across the country and reaffirmed Government's

commitment to continuous education and the modernisation of dental care infrastructure.

He also highlighted the significant strides made in strengthening the nation's health infrastructure, noting that these developments directly contribute to advancing the field of dentistry. "This year, we were able to commission six new hospitals, each equipped with its own dental department," Dr Anthony said.

As dentistry in Guyana continues to evolve, Dr Anthony said the Ministry has begun exploring innovations in digital dentistry, paving the way for more efficient and technologically advanced dental services.

The 2025 Dental Convention reflects the Ministry's ongoing mission to strengthen Guyana's health system through collaboration, professional development and improved service delivery.



# Guyana, Qatar finalise 2025 Red Crescent medical mission

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, on October 8, met with officials from the Qatar Red Crescent Society and the Embassy of Qatar in Guyana to finalise plans for the 2025 Qatar Red Crescent Medical Convoys mission to Guyana.

The mission, set to be carried out at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), will provide specialised medical consultations and

advanced surgical procedures currently not available locally.

More than just treatment, the mission also focuses on capacity building through knowledge transfer and technical training for local healthcare professionals, helping to strengthen Guyana's national health system. As part of the initiative, a team of nine specialist doctors from the Qatar Red Crescent Society will be conducting a series of high-level interventions and procedures at GPHC.

The team comprises experts in pediatric interventional cardiology and anesthesiology; obstetrics and gynaecology (OB/GYN) oncology; pediatric urology; and catheterization (cath) lab technology.

during their mission, the specialists are expected to conduct some 16 complex pediatric urology cases, 30 cardiac cath procedures, and 12 complex gynecological oncology cases.

All medical procedures will be carried out using the necessary medical

supplies and equipment provided by the Qatar Red Crescent team, ensuring smooth and efficient service delivery.

Beyond patient care, the mission also includes a roundtable discussion between representatives of the Ministry of Health, GPHC, and the Qatar delegation, focused on future collaboration, strategic health advancements, and training opportunities.

This initiative forms part of ongoing efforts to enhance specialist medical services in Guyana while supporting training and upskilling of local healthcare professionals to ensure sustainability and long-term impact.

Delivering the feature address, the Health Minister emphasised that the medical convoy represents more than just a collaborative effort, saying it marks a critical opportunity for knowledge transfer and local capacity building.

“This convoy is not solely about the team working with our local



professionals, but also about sharing expertise and building capacity within our own health system,” Dr Anthony said.

The Minister revealed that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Guyana and Qatar is currently being finalised to formalise co-operation in healthcare and other sectors. “Since establishing diplomatic relations, Qatar has been working closely with Guyana to strengthen ties across almost all spheres of development,” he said.

GPHC’s Chief Executive Officer, Mr Robbie Rambarran, said the mission will not only provide essential medical care, but also facilitate discussions on strengthening the hospital’s surgical and specialised services. “This initiative will ultimately improve patient care and benefit our patients at GPHC,” he added.

Charge’d Affaires at the Embassy of Qatar in Guyana, Mr Mohammed Imrahim Al-Rumanihi, described the initiative as “the first step in building bridges of humanitarian relations between Guyana and Qatar.”

He noted that the mission aims to perform more than 120 surgical

procedures and medical consultations, particularly focused on heart disease in children and tumors in women.

“This project is only the beginning of ongoing co-operation, reflecting the close ties between the leaders of our two friendly countries, who attach great importance to improving bilateral co-operation,” said Mr Al-Rumanihi.

He also highlighted that the visiting specialists represent renowned institutions such as Hamad Medical Corporation and Sidra Medical and Research Corporation in Qatar, underscoring his country’s commitment to sharing advanced medical expertise.

Representing the Qatar Fund for Development, Mr Yousef Ahmad Al-Mulla, reaffirmed the organisation’s commitment to supporting health, education, and economic development in partner countries. “This partnership reflects our shared dedication to strengthening healthcare systems and delivering essential medical services to the most vulnerable populations,” he said.

The launch of the Qatar Red Crescent Medical Convoy marks a new chapter

in Guyana-Qatar relations, strengthening diplomatic and humanitarian ties through healthcare collaboration and capacity building.

The Ministry of Health has expressed its gratitude to the Embassy of Qatar in Guyana and the Qatar Red Crescent Society for their continued partnership and commitment to improving healthcare outcomes in Guyana.

Others attending the launching ceremony included Representative of the Qatar Red Crescent, Mr Mohammed Ahmed Al-Beshri; Director of Medical and Professional Services attached to GPHC, Dr Navindranauth Rambarran; and other officials.



# Health Minister commends allied health professionals at conference

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, has commended the dedication and contribution of allied health professionals, emphasising their crucial role in patient care and the overall efficiency of the health system.

The Minister made the comment while delivering the feature at the 2025 Allied Health Conference, held on October 11 at Ministry of Health conference room, Brickdam, Georgetown, under the theme, “Allied Health in Transition: Evidence-Based, Prevention, and Digital Innovation.” The event brought together key stakeholders and professionals from various health disciplines to discuss advancements, challenges and opportunities in strengthening

Guyana’s healthcare delivery system.

Dr Anthony also highlighted the ministry’s ongoing commitment to continuous education, professional development, and the modernisation of health services across the country. He said the

Government remains committed to fostering research, innovation and collaboration to enhance healthcare delivery and improve the well-being of all Guyanese.

This year’s conference featured presentations and research discussions on several key areas of focus, including digital data and health; childhood

trauma as a major contributor to anxiety and depression among adults in Guyana; out-of-pocket cost and determinants of private diagnostic imaging services utilization on the Essequibo coast of Guyana; arsenic, lead, and cadmium in rice in Latin America and human health risks; the health burden of inadequate physical activity; and evidence-based benefits of exercise.

The conference also included an interactive question-and-answer session, providing participants with an opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue and share insights on the way forward for the allied health sector.



# Health Minister highlights expanding opportunities for newly graduated pharmacists

By **Shabana Shaw**

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, extended heartfelt congratulations to the latest cohort of pharmacy graduates during the White Coat Ceremony held on October 26 at Cara Lodge, Quamina Street, Georgetown.

The 22 graduates, who completed their studies in November 2023, spent the past year doing internships at various health facilities across Guyana and have now been officially licensed to practice.

Commending them on their achievements, Dr Anthony urged the new pharmacists to embrace the growing opportunities emerging within Guyana's rapidly evolving healthcare landscape. "You are graduating at a very opportune time," the Minister said.

"We have just completed six new hospitals, each equipped with its own outpatient and inpatient pharmacy, and construction is underway on eight more across the country. These new facilities will require skilled and qualified pharmacists like you."

Dr Anthony noted that hospitals are already being built in Regions One (Barima-Waini), Eight (Potaro-Siparuni), and Nine (Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo), while designs are being finalized for a new facility in Region Seven

(Cuyuni-Mazaruni).

Plans are also advancing for a hospital in the Mazaruni area, alongside the development of Level 5 hospitals in New Amsterdam in Region Six (East Berbice-Corentyne); Ogle, East Coast Demerara in Region Four (Demerara-Mahaica) where the Maternal and Child Health Hospital is being established; and West Demerara in Region Three (Essequibo Islands-West Demerara).

The Minister encouraged the graduates to continue their academic pursuits, emphasising the importance of advanced training and research in strengthening Guyana's pharmaceutical and scientific capacity. "Pharmacy is a dynamic and exciting field. We want to see more of you advancing to doctorate level studies, engaging in research and innovation," he said. "Medicine is constantly evolving, if you stop learning, you fall behind. Guyana needs pharmacists who are inquisitive, ambitious, and committed to driving scientific progress."

Dr Anthony outlined the Government's long-term vision to transform Guyana into a biomedical and life sciences hub, an initiative designed to foster pharmaceutical research, innovation and manufacturing.

"We aim to move beyond clinical care and become a producer of

pharmaceuticals. Our biodiversity provides a rich source of natural compounds that can lead to new medical discoveries. We need scientists and pharmacists who can help us harness these resources responsibly and effectively," he said.

To advance this goal, Guyana is preparing to sign an agreement with one of Europe's largest life sciences parks, located in southern Belgium, to support the establishment of a local life sciences park.

Additionally, the Government is finalising an agreement with a French aid organisation to facilitate capacity-building initiatives, including postgraduate training opportunities in France, Germany, the Netherlands and other European countries.

The Minister also revealed that discussions are underway with several international pharmaceutical companies interested in partnering with Guyana to produce biosimilars, medicines equivalent to well-known drugs such as Ozempic.

"These partnerships will open doors for industrial pharmacy and local pharmaceutical manufacturing. We are laying the groundwork for a future where Guyana not only delivers high-quality healthcare but also contributes to global pharmaceutical innovation," Dr Anthony said.

As part of the health sector's modernisation efforts, the Health Ministry is currently overhauling the Materials Management Unit (MMU) to enhance efficiency, transparency and accountability in the storage and distribution of medicines across the public health system.

"We are working with Ernst & Young, one of the world's leading consulting firms, to modernize the MMU. This includes implementing advanced warehousing, inventory tracking, and medication dispensing systems," said Dr Anthony.

He said, for too long, Guyana has faced losses due to expired or unaccounted-for drugs. Through digitisation, the ministry will be able to monitor stock in real time, prevent theft and strengthen supply chain management. Construction has already commenced on five new regional warehouses designed to ensure medicines are stored and distributed under optimal conditions.

Dr Anthony emphasised that pharmacists will play a crucial role in this reform process, particularly in maintaining high standards of medication management and distribution across the regions. He urged graduates to advocate for a more collaborative approach to patient care, saying healthcare delivery in Guyana has often been too “doctor-centric.”

The Minister pointed out that, in modern healthcare, all professionals involved in patient care must work as a team. “Pharmacists play a vital role. If you notice a prescription that could cause harmful drug interactions, you must have the confidence to raise it with the prescriber, respectfully but firmly. That is how we ensure patient safety and better outcomes,” he said.

Dr Anthony also announced plans to establish a Quality Department within the Ministry of Health to review treatment charts, assess prescribing practices, and recommend improvements. He added that Guyana’s transition to electronic health records will integrate clinical decision support systems, technology designed to automatically flag potential prescription conflicts.

The Health Minister underscored the urgent need to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR), warning that the improper use of antibiotics poses a serious threat to global and national health.

“Every time antibiotics are dispensed without a prescription, we contribute to antimicrobial resistance. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that nearly eight million people could die in the coming years due to AMR. We have already seen cases in Guyana where patients failed to respond to any available antibiotic,” he cautioned.

Noting that, with major pharmaceutical companies scaling back investment in antibiotic development due to low profitability,

he said the crisis requires a coordinated response from health professionals. The Minister called on pharmacists to help curb antibiotic misuse, both in human medicine and within the poultry industry, where overuse remains a concern.

Dr Anthony encouraged the graduates to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and ethics in their practice. “We must change the culture where patients receive less than their full prescription or where antibiotics are sold without oversight. If we want to deliver better care, it is up to all of us to make it happen. As new pharmacists, we expect you to lead by example,” he said.

Meanwhile, Chair of the Pharmacy Council of Guyana, Dr Karishma Jeeboo, reaffirmed the Council’s commitment to strengthening pharmacy education, professional standards, and regulatory oversight as she addressed the newly licensed pharmacists.

Dr Jeeboo explained that, in keeping with the Pharmacy Practitioners’ Act of 2003, the Pharmacy Council of Guyana plays a central role in



The newly licenced pharmacist are joined by (seated from left) President of the Guyana Pharmacists Association, Mr Kwame Waldron; Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony; Chair of the Pharmacy Council of Guyana, Dr Karishma Jeeboo; Director of Medical and Professional Services at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), Dr Navindranauth Rambaran; and Chief Medical Officer (ag) of the Ministry of Health, Dr Jeetendra Mohanlall, among other special invitees.

regulating and supervising the internship programme for graduates of recognised pharmacy institutions.

In recent years, the council has introduced several key initiatives to enhance the internship experience. These include expanding training sites beyond the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) to regional health facilities, revising the internship manual, and enriching intern activities through structured patient care plans, medication histories and discharge counselling.

Additionally, the council implemented a structured exit examination, which all current graduates successfully completed, ensuring that interns

demonstrate the competencies required for professional pharmacy practice.

Dr Jeeboo noted that the council intends to streamline preceptorship by providing structured training and continuing education opportunities for preceptors, while also expanding internship rotations to include areas beyond clinical pharmacy practice.

As part of its ongoing mandate, the council is also reviewing and updating the regulations under the Pharmacy Practitioners' Act and pursuing amendments to reflect the evolving scope and responsibilities of pharmacists in Guyana.

Notably, in August 2025, the council received the Caribbean Association of Pharmacists' Excellence in Regulatory Affairs Award, which recognises pharmacy councils and inspectors across the region, for demonstrating exceptional dedication to ethical standards and regulatory excellence in advancing the profession and protecting public health.

Also in attendance at ceremony were Chief Medical Officer (ag) of the Ministry of Health, Dr Jeetendra Mohanlall; Director of Medical and Professional Services at GPHC, Dr Navindranauth Rambaran; and President of the Guyana Pharmacists Association, Mr Kwame Waldron.

# Guyana reaffirms commitment to global polio eradication efforts

The Ministry of Health has reaffirmed Guyana's unwavering support for global and national efforts to eradicate polio.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, gave the commitment

during his address at the annual Rotary Club Polio Walk held on October 12 in Georgetown. The event is part of a worldwide initiative aimed at raising awareness and support for the complete eradication of poliomyelitis (polio).

Dr Anthony commended the Rotary Club and its members for their consistent advocacy and dedication to the cause. He highlighted Guyana's longstanding success in maintaining a polio-free status due to its high immunisation coverage.

"In Guyana, we have maintained close to 100 percent coverage for the oral polio vaccine. Every child born here receives the vaccine, which has played a vital role in keeping our country polio-free for many years," the Minister said.

He emphasised that while Guyana and other Caribbean nations have successfully kept polio at bay,

continued public awareness, education, and vaccination efforts remain crucial, not only to preserve this status, but also to support countries where the disease remains endemic.

World Polio Day, observed annually, serves as a platform to highlight the importance of vaccination and global solidarity in the fight against polio.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), polio is a highly infectious disease that primarily affects children under five. It spreads mainly through the faecal-oral route and can cause irreversible paralysis in as little as a few hours. In severe cases, paralysis of the respiratory muscles can lead to death.

The Minister extended heartfelt thanks to the Rotary Club and its international partners for their ongoing commitment to public health and urged them to broaden their focus in the coming year.

# Guyana targets elimination of lymphatic filariasis by 2030

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, has urged expanded community engagement aimed at tackling lymphatic filariasis, saying Government is committed to eliminating the disease by 2030.

Speaking during the Rotary Club Polio Walk on October 12, the Minister called for greater public-private collaboration in addressing key public health challenges. He applauded the

organisation's role in promoting public health awareness.

“Filaria has impacted our population for centuries,” said Dr Anthony. “We are now at a critical juncture. The disease has been eliminated in eight of our ten administrative regions. Only small pockets remain in Regions Three (Essequibo Islands-West Demerara) and Four (Mahaica-Berbice), and we are preparing for another round of Mass Drug Administration (MDA) to further reduce transmission.”

He explained that the Ministry of Health believes that, with sustained effort and strong community participation, Guyana is well on track to achieving elimination of the disease nationwide by 2030.

In Guyana, MDA uses a combination of three medicines to fight filaria. The medications include Ivermectin (I), Diethylcarbamazine (D) and Albendazole (A). Together, they are called the IDA triple drug regimen, with each drug helping in a different way to kill the tiny worms that cause

the disease.

In addition to addressing infectious diseases, Dr. Anthony also highlighted the growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, particularly among younger adults.

“We are seeing more individuals in the 40 to 50 age group requiring serious interventions like cardiac stents,” he said. “As our country becomes more prosperous, lifestyle-related illnesses are becoming more prevalent, making preventative healthcare and education increasingly vital.”

The Minister commended the Rotary Club's Walk as an example of a successful, community-driven initiative that promotes healthy living. He urged civil society organisations to continue hosting similar activities to raise awareness and encourage healthier lifestyles. He also challenged stakeholders to broaden the scope of future initiatives to include other pressing health issues as well.

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# Act now to stop young people becoming the next generation of smokers

## - Health Minister

The Ministry of Health's Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Programme hosted a training of Trainers on Tobacco Cessation Continuing Medical Education (CME) session on October 18 at Parc Rayne Hotel, Rahaman's Park, East Bank Demerara.

The session brought together health professionals from across the country, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to strengthen tobacco cessation services within the public health system.

In delivering the feature address, Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, underscored the urgent need to reduce tobacco use and its impact on chronic NCDs nationwide.

“We must act now to prevent our young people from becoming the next generation of smokers. If tobacco companies are allowed to entice young people before the age of 18, we risk creating lifelong smokers. This is why education, legislation, and clinical support must all work together,” he said.

Minister Anthony reflected on Guyana's progress since joining the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and enacting national tobacco legislation in 2017, which restricts sales, marketing and public smoking.

He further emphasised that the ministry is scaling up tobacco cessation clinics, now operating in 11 locations across Regions Three (Essequibo Islands-West Demerara) and Four (Demerara- Mahaica), with plans to expand to all regions.

Dr Anthony also noted that through initiatives, such as nicotine replacement therapy and public education, the ministry aims to make cessation support accessible at the primary care level.

“Tobacco use remains one of the leading risk factors for cancers, heart disease, and respiratory illness, if we can prevent people from starting, and help others to quit, we can save lives and reduce the burden of chronic diseases in Guyana,” he said.

This training forms part of the Ministry's ongoing efforts to strengthen capacity within the health sector to address lifestyle-related diseases and promote healthy living.

Among those present at the training were Coordinator, Chronic Disease Unit and Mental Health Programme Dr Daniele Drepaul; Officer in Charge at World Health Organization/Pan American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) Guyana, Dr Natasha Sobers; Technical Officer for Tobacco Control, Dr Shelieza Gopie; and International PAHO Consultant and Tobacco Cessation Specialist, Dr. Vasant Basdeo.



# Health Minister commends Medical Extension Officers at 48th anniversary event

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, on October 18, attended an appreciation dinner celebrating the 48th anniversary of the Medical Extension Officers in Guyana.

The event was held in recognition of the invaluable contributions of Medical Extension Officers to the country's healthcare system. These professionals have played a critical role in ensuring that quality healthcare services reach communities across the nation, particularly in remote and underserved areas.

In his remarks, Minister Anthony commended the officers for their continued dedication and service over the decades. He highlighted their importance as vital links in the delivery of primary healthcare and reaffirmed the ministry's

commitment to supporting their ongoing professional development and well-being.

The appreciation dinner also served as an opportunity to reflect on the growth and evolution of the Medical Extension Officers Programme, while expressing gratitude to those who have served faithfully since its inception.

The Ministry of Health has extended warm congratulations to all Medical Extension Officers on this milestone and expressed sincere appreciation for their unwavering commitment to advancing healthcare in Guyana.



Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, presenting an award to one of the Medical Extension Officers.





# 38 graduate as Patient Care Assistants in Region Five

Thirty-eight candidates have successfully graduated from the Ministry of Health's Patient Care Assistant (PCA) Programme in Region Five (Mahaica-Berbice), marking another step in the Government's ongoing efforts to strengthen the delivery of quality healthcare services across Guyana.

The newly trained PCAs are now equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to provide direct, hands-on care to patients under the supervision of Nursing Assistants or Registered Nurses. Their training covered essential areas such as basic nursing care, infection prevention and control, patient hygiene, communication, and ethics in healthcare delivery.

The programme, implemented

through the Ministry of Health's Health Sciences Education Division, continues to serve as a key initiative in expanding the healthcare workforce, particularly in regional and community health facilities.

During the graduation ceremony on October 24, Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, commended the graduates for their dedication and resilience throughout the training period, noting that their commitment reflects the ministry's vision of improving health outcomes at every level of care.

Dr Anthony encouraged the graduates to approach their new roles with compassion, professionalism, and integrity. "The Ministry has been making continuous efforts to expand

health care across the country, recognising that achieving quality health care requires strengthening the workforce within the system," he said.

The Minister emphasised that the goal is to ensure each region has an adequate number of health workers, reducing the need for staff to travel between regions to provide services. He noted that the ministry plans to implement 116 primary health care interventions aimed at reducing the disease burden and improving health outcomes across all regions.

He added that the Ministry of Health remains committed to investing in training and capacity building to ensure that every region across Guyana benefits from a competent, caring and well-prepared healthcare workforce.

# Health Ministry supports breast cancer awareness through annual Pinktober walk



As breast cancer continues to be a leading health concern among women in Guyana, the Ministry of Health on October 26, joined forces with non-governmental organisation (NGO) One Communication for their annual Pinktober breast cancer awareness walk, an initiative aimed at raising awareness, promoting early detection, and supporting those affected by the disease.

Scores of participants turned out in solidarity, all dressed in shades of pink to demonstrate unity, hope, and commitment to the fight against breast cancer. The walk began at Scout Association Ground, Woolford Avenue, Georgetown with brief awareness messages of encouragement.

Delivering the feature address, Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, commended the organisers and participants for keeping the message of awareness alive. He emphasised that while significant progress has been made in improving screening and treatment services across the country, the ministry remains committed to expanding access to mammography, ultrasound screening,

and oncology support services in every region.

“Every year in October, we come together for this walk as a way to raise awareness about cancer prevention,” the Minister noted. “What began as a simple awareness initiative has now evolved into a movement that inspires people to take action and make their health a priority.”

Dr Anthony underscored the importance of early screening, noting that early detection saves lives. He encouraged citizens, particularly women, to make use of available services and to get their mammography screenings done regularly.

The Health Minister also highlighted the ministry’s efforts to improve access to diagnostic services across the country. “We now have mammography machines installed at Suddie Hospital, Linden Hospital Complex, New Amsterdam Hospital, and Lethem Regional Hospital,” he said.

“Already, we’ve seen many persons taking advantage of these services,

which is exactly what we want for people to use the resources available and take charge of their health,” added Dr Anthony.

The Minister also acknowledged the efforts of healthcare professionals, survivors, advocacy groups, and corporate partners who continue to champion the cause throughout Pinktober. He urged citizens to move beyond symbolic gestures and to take active steps by encouraging regular check-ups and supporting awareness activities year-round.

Representatives from One Communication pointed out that the annual event seeks not only to raise awareness, but also to create a safe space for survivors to share their stories and inspire others.

The Ministry of Health continues to encourage women and men alike to schedule regular screenings and to remain vigilant in monitoring changes in their bodies, reinforcing the national message: “Early Detection Saves Lives.”

# Health Minister underscores commitment to eliminating leprosy by 2030

The Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO), on October 28, launched a Subregional Leprosy Training Workshop in Guyana.

The initiative is aimed at strengthening clinical, laboratory and programmatic capacities across participating countries to enhance leprosy case detection, diagnosis, treatment and follow-up. The workshop also seeks to support the development of national strategies aligned with the global leprosy elimination goals.

Participants from eight (invited countries) are attending the training, which features a combination of theoretical sessions, hands-on clinical practice with patients; supervised laboratory activities; and modules on prevention, treatment and documentation.

Delivering remarks at the opening ceremony, Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, commended PAHO for spearheading the regional effort and reaffirmed Guyana's national commitment to eliminating leprosy by 2030.

“We have made significant strides in controlling leprosy, but our goal is total elimination,” said Dr Anthony. “This

workshop is timely, as it will equip our health professionals with the tools and knowledge needed to identify and treat cases early, and to ensure that stigma does not hinder care and rehabilitation,” he noted.

The Minister highlighted that the ministry continues to strengthen its national health programmes aimed at the prevention and elimination of other priority conditions, including epilepsy and cervical cancer, the latter being the second most prevalent cancer among women in Guyana.

The training will help countries adopt best practices and accelerate progress toward the global target of zero leprosy.

The event reflects PAHO's continued commitment to supporting member states in strengthening health systems, reducing disease burden, and advancing the vision of universal health for all.



# Pharmaceutical systems, local manufacturing opportunities showcased at local symposium

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, has reaffirmed Government's commitment to advancing the pharmaceutical sector in Guyana, noting that the pharmacy profession in Guyana has made significant progress through ongoing education, professional collaboration, and the introduction of new medical products.

During his feature address at the Massy Distribution 2nd Pharmacists Symposium, held on October 5 at the Massy Convention Hall, Montrose, East Coast Demerara, the Minister extended best wishes to pharmacists in recognition of World Pharmacy Day and commended their continued contribution to improving healthcare delivery across the country.

He announced the completion of the new Medicines and Regulatory Bill, which aims to modernise and strengthen the regulation of pharmaceuticals in Guyana. The Bill, soon to be tabled in Parliament, includes provisions for enhanced pharmacovigilance, batch testing of medications, and clinical trial regulations to ensure patient safety and product quality.

“We are building a robust system that will allow us to monitor and test drugs locally, rather than depending on overseas laboratories. Construction will soon begin on a new Food and Drug Administration facility at the



University of Guyana (UG), which will house a state-of-the-art drug testing laboratory,” the Minister said.

He further revealed ongoing efforts to digitise the public health system through the introduction of electronic health records at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC). This system will allow for better coordination between doctors, pharmacists, and laboratory staff, ensuring safer and more efficient patient care.

To address issues of storage and distribution, the Ministry is also implementing a new inventory management system at the Materials Management Unit (MMU) in partnership with international firm

Ernst & Young, and constructing new, modern medication bonds in several regions. These improvements will enhance accountability and reduce instances of drug shortages or expirations.

In closing, the Health Minister urged pharmacists to partner with the Ministry on public health campaigns, including Pinktober (breast cancer awareness) and the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination drive for boys and girls aged 9 to 15 years.

He added that Guyana is among the first Caribbean countries to introduce the Gardasil 9 vaccine, the most advanced HPV vaccine currently available, free of cost.

# Health Ministry launches **Pinktober** 2025 in collaboration with NGOs



The Ministry of Health, in partnership with two non-governmental organisations (NGOs), One Communication and Champion of Hope, officially launched Pinktober 2025 on October 1 under the theme, “Act Now, Live Strong”.

Pinktober, observed annually in October, honours Cancer Awareness Month underscoring the importance of early screening, timely access to treatment, and strengthened palliative care services in Guyana.

Delivering remarks on behalf of the Ministry of Health, Chronic Disease Coordinator, Dr Dianele Drepaul,

stressed the need for cancer awareness efforts to extend beyond October.

“This is not just a month marked by the colour pink. Every October, many wear pink and go for screening, but once the month ends, the efforts die down,” said Dr Drepaul. “We need to emphasise that every day we should take initiative to protect our health not only from breast cancer, but from all chronic diseases. Far too often, Guyanese wait until they are very ill before seeking medical care, expecting miracles at the last moment. Early detection saves lives.”

Dr Drepaul also reminded the

audience that breast cancer affects both women and men, and is currently the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in Guyana. She shared a personal story about her grandmother, who survived breast cancer following early detection and treatment, emphasising the life-saving value of timely screenings.

The launch marked the start of a month-long calendar of activities aimed at spreading awareness, encouraging preventive health practices, and offering support to cancer survivors and their families.

# Health Ministry, Peace Corps discuss MOU for health sector strengthening

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, accompanied by Chief Medical Officer, Dr Narine Singh, on October 8, met with Director of Programme and Training at Peace Corps, Mr Brian Zoeller, and his team at the Ministry's Brickdam Office, Georgetown.

The discussions focused on renewing the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Ministry of Health and the Peace Corps for another two years to continue supporting health projects with volunteers.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, on October 15 met with representatives of the Pan American Health Organisation/World Health Organisation (PAHO/WHO) as part of a second mission to advance the development of Guyana's Health National Adaptation Plan (HNAP).

The mission team, comprising representatives from PAHO/WHO, Mr Leon Charles and Dr Lindonne Telesford, is conducting multisectoral consultations to validate findings from Phase 1 of the HNAP process and identify priority adaptation strategies to strengthen the health sector's resilience to climate change impacts.

Also in attendance were PAHO/WHO Representative to Guyana, Dr Kim Eva Dickson, and Director of Climate Change and Environmental Health, Mr Nayan Persaud.

# Health Minister, PAHO/WHO team discuss strengthening climate resilient health system

The mission forms part of the European Union (EU) funded Strengthening Climate Resilient Health Systems in the Caribbean project, implemented by PAHO/WHO across 16 Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM) member countries.

# EU Ambassador pays courtesy call on Health Minister

## Meeting focuses on health sector collaboration

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, on October 22 during a courtesy call, welcomed the newly appointed Resident Ambassador of the Delegation of the European Union (EU) to Guyana Mr Luca Pierantoni.

The meeting, held at the Health Ministry's Brickdam office, Georgetown provided an opportunity for both officials to discuss areas of

mutual interest and explore potential avenues for strengthening collaboration between the Ministry of Health and the EU in advancing Guyana's health sector.



# Health Minister assesses healthcare projects in Region 5

While in Region Five (Mahaica-Berbice) on October 24, Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, conducted a series of site visits across to assess the progress of ongoing healthcare projects aimed at improving access to quality medical services within the region.

The Minister's stops included the Woodley Park Health Centre, Stimulation Centre, No. 28 Health Post, Litchfield Health Centre and Belladrum Health Centre.

During the visits, Minister Anthony engaged with regional health officials and contractors to review construction progress and ensure that works are being executed according to schedule and standards.

The Minister reiterated the Government's commitment to strengthening primary healthcare infrastructure and ensuring that residents across Guyana, benefit from improved facilities and enhanced healthcare delivery.



# Gov't committed to building a modern, patient-centred future for dentistry

## - Health Minister

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr Frank Anthony, has reaffirmed the Government's commitment to advancing oral and dental health services nationwide.

The Minister made the comment on October 25 as he addressed dental professionals gathered for the 2025 Dental Auxiliary Conference, held under the theme, "Building Thriving Dental Practices for the Future." The event was hosted at the Mirage Banquet Hall, Brickdam, Georgetown, bringing together dental practitioners, auxiliary staff and stakeholders from across the country to discuss innovations,

challenges, and the future of dental care in Guyana.

Dr Anthony commended the Dental Health Services and the Cheddi Jagan Dental Centre for organising the annual conference, which provides a vital platform for professional networking and knowledge sharing.

The Minister highlighted the remarkable progress made in strengthening Guyana's dental infrastructure and modernising oral health services. He pointed to the complete transformation of the Cheddi Jagan Dental School, which now features state-of-the-art equipment, improved clinical spaces, and an in-house pharmacy.

"We have been working steadfastly to improve the infrastructure that we have," he said. "Today, the Cheddi Jagan Dental School represents the kind of environment we want to replicate in every region-centres of excellence that deliver quality, modern dental care."

Dr Anthony outlined the ministry's steps toward digital dentistry, including the introduction of electronic patient records at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC). This system, expected to be fully operational by early 2026, will allow seamless access to patient information

He noted the introduction of Computer Aided Design and Manufacturing (CAD/CAM) systems cutting-edge technology that allows for same day dental restorations such as crowns, improving patient experience and clinical outcomes.

“This is the future of dentistry digital, efficient, and patient-centred. With CAD/CAM systems, procedures that once took weeks can now be completed in an hour,” said the Minister.

He also highlighted the success of the school health programme, which includes dental screenings for students entering nursery, primary and secondary levels. More than 60,000 nursery and primary school students have already been screened under this initiative, aimed at promoting early detection and prevention of oral and developmental health issues.

Dr Anthony said the Ministry of Health continues to prioritise the expansion of dental departments in all new and existing regional hospitals, ensuring that modern and patient-centred oral health services are accessible across Guyana.



# Health Minister welcomes 21st Chinese Medical Team

Frank Anthony, welcomed the 21st Chinese Medical Team to Guyana during a courtesy visit on October 28 at his Brickdam Office, Georgetown.

The 18-member team, representing various medical specialties including internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, ophthalmology, traditional Chinese medicine, and public health, met with the Minister to share details about their composition, areas of service and upcoming activities.

for the longstanding collaboration between Guyana and China, noting the invaluable contributions made by Chinese medical teams in strengthening the country’s healthcare system. He reaffirmed the Health Ministry’s commitment to supporting their continued work in improving access to quality healthcare across Guyana.

Also present were Director of Medical and Professional Services, Dr Navindranauth Rambaran, and Chief Medical Officer (ag), Dr Jeetendra Mohanlall.

Minister of Health, Honourable Dr

Dr Anthony expressed his appreciation





# Health Ministry celebrates **DIWALI**

Staff of the Ministry of Health came together on October 17 to celebrate Diwali, the Festival of Lights, and a time that symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil.

The celebration highlighted the spirit of unity, diversity and cultural appreciation within the ministry, as staff members

joined in traditional music, dance, and the sharing of sweets and festive greetings.

Through vibrant colours, smiles and togetherness, the ministry reaffirmed its commitment to fostering harmony and inclusivity among all staff, reflecting the true meaning of Diwali, and spreading love and hope to everyone.

