



Caribbean Wellness Day 2014

The CARICOM Heads of Summit on Chronic Diseases in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, September 2007, established Caribbean Wellness Day. Caribbean Wellness Day is observed every year on the second Saturday of September. Inaugurated in 2008, Caribbean Wellness Day (CWD) is an annual event which provides an opportunity to increase the awareness of the non-communicable diseases (NCDs) burden in the Caribbean; mobilise and strengthen public, private, and civil society partnerships for NCDs; promote multi-country, multi-sectoral activities in support of wellness; and showcase national and community level activities to promote healthy living and encourage residents to develop good health practices.

The first four years, 2008-2011, focused on raising awareness of Caribbean Wellness Day at the national, regional and international levels. In 2012, a decision was taken to focus on preventing and controlling NCDs throughout the life course during 2012-2015. Caribbean Wellness Day observance was to be integrated into national NCDs Programmes to ensure sustainability.

The following focus and themes were proposed:

2012 focused on children under the theme "Building the foundation for building healthy lifestyles"

2013 focused on youth ages 15-29 under the theme "Safeguarding the health of our youth for a brighter future"

2014 the focus is on adults "Preserving the workforce for national and regional development"

2015 the focus will be on the elderly "Improving the quality of life of the Region's ageing population".

As proposed, this year the focus of Caribbean Wellness Day is on **adults: Preserving the workforce for national and Regional development**; with the supporting theme "The Heart of a Productive Workforce is a Healthy Workforce."

Therefore, workers and worksites have an opportunity to establish healthy workplace initiatives or scale up existing ones to help in addressing chronic non-communicable diseases (CNCDs) and their risk factors. These may include:

Policy - develop healthy workplace policy/standards building on occupational health and safety laws and policies, offer templates for workplace-based policy/standards addressing CNCDs specifically; this provides a stepping stone to address other health issues and expand other existing healthy workplace initiatives.

Supportive environments - advocate for facilities within the workplace or shared between workplaces that will enable – smoke free-spaces, offer healthy foods, exercising facilities and ongoing health education to develop personal responsibility and action for continued wellness.

Reorienting services - develop as part of services available for employees, primary health care opportunities/services e.g. periodic screening for risk factors etc., or making available at community health facilities special packages for workers in that area.

Building personal health skills - develop and/or build on existing health education programmes in the workplace, emphasising CNCD preventative measures, and care and treatment information, developing innovative health education initiatives targeting sub-populations within the work place, possibly along gender lines.

Empowering communities - explore and forge workplace community collaboration to facilitate health and wellness among the population e.g. agreements of collaboration to share or develop exercise facilities, screening services etc.

Building alliances with special emphasis on the media - identify other possible stakeholders i.e. civil society, faith based, youth, aged population groups that will provide an opportunity to reach those populations in the work place or community and influence the development of targeted health education initiatives. Involve the media as a workplace itself, which could impact the level of their sustained advocacy for healthy workplaces and advocating for CNCDs.