



Message from Dr C. James Hospedales
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Caribbean Wellness Day 2018 Promotes Health at Work: A Basic Human Right

The United Nations (UN), The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) state that every individual has a right to healthy and safe work and to a work environment that enables him or her to live a socially and economically productive life.

In keeping with this basic human right to health at work, Caribbean Wellness Day 2018, bears the theme, **Healthy Communities: Preserving the Workforce** and urges individuals to **Be healthy, stay healthy, it's your job!**

The reality for most persons is that one-third of our adult life is spent at work. The conditions of work and the work environment can either have a positive or negative impact on our health and well-being. In light of this, the need for work place health promotion in disease prevention and wellness is beneficial to all.

This is especially important as the Caribbean remains the region of the Americas worst affected by the epidemic of chronic noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases. In Latin America and the Caribbean, NCDs are the leading cause of premature death, accounting for nearly half of all deaths of persons under 70 years, and for two out of three deaths overall.

This is a serious concern for our Region because treating preventable NCDs is very costly and it imposes a large economic burden on patients, their families, businesses, governments, social security and society at large. A closer look at diabetes tells us that it is a major cause of admissions to hospitals, kidney failure, blindness and limb amputations in the Region. Treatment of hypertension and diabetes in selected Caribbean countries is estimated to cost 1.4% to 8.0 % of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The costs are simply not sustainable for our small, fragile island and low-lying states.

There is no doubt that workers have a responsibility for their own health, but employers also have a role to play by adhering to strategies outlined in the [Caribbean Charter for Health Promotion](#), including the development of healthy workplace policies, the creation of supportive work environments and to increase employees' personal health skills.

One UK business executive said, “We are embedding health and well-being at the heart of our business strategy because our people are our greatest asset, and we recognize that a healthy, happy and committed workforce is vital to our business success.”

As a Region, let us adopt a similar attitude and work together to reduce this burden of NCDs. In the weeks leading to Caribbean Wellness Day (CWD) and through the UN High Level Meeting on NCDs in New York on September 27th, let us move to accelerate our response to address NCDs for the health and well-being of this and future generations. I appeal to private sector, governments, civil society, communities and individuals to do all that you can to make the healthy choice, the easy choice for all, especially at our places of work.

Please take some time to review the helpful tips for promoting work place wellness in your organization in our CWD toolkit at <http://carpha.org/Media-Centre/Caribbean-Wellness-Day-2018>

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