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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CARPHA Encourages Persons to Know their Blood Pressure

Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, May 16, 2014: The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) is calling on persons to know their blood pressure, strive to keep it healthy or lower it. This is in keeping with the theme for World Hypertension Day (WHD) 2014, ‘Know Your Blood Pressure’.

According to the Basic Indicators on Non-communicable Diseases published by the Pan American Health Organization in 2011, there is a prevalence rate of hypertension ranging from 25 to 42 percent in the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean. Hypertension is defined as “an adult with raised blood pressure (systolic BP≥140 or diastolic BP≥90) and/or taking antihypertensive medication”.

In September 2011, the United Nations (UN) High Level meeting on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) identified the indicators listed below as goals to be achieved in the prevention and control of NCDs by all countries in 2025:

- Reduce premature mortality due to non-communicable diseases by 25%
- Reduce raised blood pressure by 25%
- Reduce salt/sodium intake by 30%
- Reduce the harmful use of alcohol by 10%
- Reduce physical inactivity by 10%
- Reduce tobacco use by 30% and
- No increase in diabetes and obesity

CARPHA is committed to supporting the Caribbean region to meet these goals.

The Agency is working with international partners to enable countries and territories in the region, to begin collecting data and reporting on the indicators to CARPHA beginning
2015. In addition, CARPHA will support countries to facilitate efforts towards the reduction of salt in manufactured products.

Combined and coordinated efforts at local, national, regional, and global levels will be required to: increase public awareness of the dangers of high blood pressure; address the risk factors associated with this ‘silent killer’; and, to promote the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle at all ages.

For this reason CARPHA is encouraging persons to get an annual checkup, regularly walk and exercise, eat more fruit and vegetables, stop smoking and reduce salt in the diet to help lower your blood pressure. If you have been diagnosed with hypertension it’s important to stay on the treatment prescribed by your doctor or health provider, especially if you have other risks like diabetes, high cholesterol, or are a smoker.

World Hypertension Day (WHD) was inaugurated by the World Hypertension League, a division of the International Society of Hypertension, in 2005 to raise awareness about high blood pressure around the world. May 17, 2014 will mark the tenth anniversary of World Hypertension Day since its inception in 2005.

Notes to Editors:

- The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) is the new single regional public health agency for the Caribbean. It was legally established in July 2011 by an Inter-Governmental Agreement signed by Caribbean Community Member States and began operation in January 2013.

- The Agency is the Caribbean Region’s collective response to strengthening and reorienting our health system approach so that we are equipped to address the changing nature of public health challenges. The approach is people-centred and evidence-based.

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