**Barbados’ health care facilities commended**

**Primary health care vital**

**THE Americas region is endeavouring to be the first to eliminate mother to child transmission of HIV/AIDS and Barbados is playing a part in that regard, as well as ensuring that all persons with HIV have access to treatment.**

Speaking during a press conference held at the David Thompson Health and Social Services Complex yesterday, Director of the Pan America Health Organisation (PAHO), Dr. Carissa Etienne, who is on an official visit to Barbados, said the Americas has had many firsts, including being the first to eliminate smallpox, polio, rubella, congenital rubella syndrome and measles, and she said the region is on an official visit to Barbados. She said the region is on an official visit to Barbados, the Psychiatric Hospital and the David Thompson Health and Social Services Complex are among the best she has seen. However, she said it is not just about the quality of the facility, but how well we organised comprehensive health services and ensures people have access to quality services; and in that regard, she said Barbados is doing extremely well.

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mobilisation because the cost of delivering all of this technical cooperation is not met entirely by the member states and World Health Organisation. So we mobilise significant resources to enable us to deliver more technical cooperation to countries like Barbados and the other countries where we have offices and where we don’t have offices. Every member state has an allocation, there is a budget and there is a regional budget policy that states how much money minimum must be put to every country in the region,” she said.

The PAHO head made the point as she noted that they have taken steps to reduce significantly the portion of the budget that stays in Washington and that increased the budget at the level of the country offices.

Etienne’s remarks came as she said that “a lot of very good initiatives” are also taking place here as it relates to health care, and as such, she said that they often use this country as an example for many countries in the Caribbean region. Moreover, she said the facilities she visited in Barbados – the Psychiatric Hospital and the David Thompson Health and Social Services Complex are among the best she has seen. However, she said it is not just about the quality of the facility, but how well we organised comprehensive health services and ensures people have access to quality services; and in that regard, she said Barbados is doing extremely well.

**Director of the Pan America Health Organisation (PAHO), Dr. Carissa Etienne is reiterating the importance to member states of having such a programme in place.**

She was speaking during a press conference yesterday at the David Thompson Health and Social Services Complex, as she noted that universal access to health and universal health coverage cannot be achieved, nor can reductions be made in health care costs and improvements made in the health and well-being of people, if the primary care programmes are not strengthened.

“Not only must we invest in primary health care, we must ensure that we invest in building the capacity of the services of primary health care to deliver on the needs of persons to ensure the comprehensive approach to health care and that quality is emphasised. These facilities must also be tailored to what are the emerging needs of the population,” she said.

Her comments came as she also offered high praise for the David Thompson Health and Social Services Complex describing it as “a very impressive multi-purpose facility”, and the direction that they want to see health development moving in general. Facilities like that complex, she noted, ensure that persons do not have to go to several places to access health services and so she applauded the Government for establishing it.

“I was happy to see the Physical Therapy Department. We live in a community where we have lots of motor vehicle accidents, and these road traffic accidents end in disability; we have a community with the prevalence of NCDs where we see people with strokes and these people need to have physical therapy. At the same time, I also saw services for a visiting psychiatrist, that is also one of the programmes that is a priority programme in terms of access to mental services and the de-stigmatisation of mental health illness,” she said.

Furthermore, “PAHO is very clear and our member states are very clear that we need to journey towards universal health coverage and universal access to health. That means that everyone must have access to comprehensive quality care, and when we say comprehensive, we mean preventive, promotion, curative, rehabilitative care, quality services at a price they can afford and that does not place them into financial hardships, but that also meets their needs.”

In that regard, she said, the focus must be on the vulnerable and poor.

Additionally, she explained that her office has been working closely with member states to address health care financing and have been employing health economists to assist countries. With that in mind, Etienne said that while primary health care is important, it cannot operate in a vacuum, and so there must also be good services at the secondary and tertiary levels.

“You can’t build a system just on primary health care; you need the hospitals for support. But you don’t need hospitals that are going to shunt all of the resources just to keep them going. It needs to be a good integrated and balanced approach and we need to ensure access to medicines and technology,” she said.

In this vein Barbados has also been commended, as the PAHO head spoke to the fact that patients can access medicines free of charge at the state-owned pharmacies.