



**PRESIDENTIAL NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE PREVENTION AND
CONTROL OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

252 Quamina Street, South Cummingsburg, Georgetown Guyana.
Email:ncdcommissionguyana@gmail.com

PRESS STATEMENT

PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF NCDs

MESSAGE FOR WORLD CANCER DAY 2021

Seventeen persons die every minute around the world because of cancer. This is unacceptable. The global situation and the scourge of cancer is not just a global problem, it is a serious health and developmental problem right here in Guyana. The Presidential Commission on the Prevention and Control of Cancer in Guyana joins our sisters and brothers in Guyana and around the world in committing our energy to reduce and end the scourge of cancer in our country and in countries around the world.

We urge our government and the Ministry of Health to accelerate the development of a Publicly Guaranteed Package of Essential Services to prevent and Control Cancer in our country. On this World Cancer Day 2021, we signal our intention to recommend a package of services for the prevention and control of cancer and we hope that the government will adopt this package for inclusion in the Publicly Guaranteed Package of Health Services in the Public Health Sector. We will also propose a list of Best Buys for the Prevention and Control of Cancer and we strongly hope that the Government adopts these recommendations. These two initiatives are high on our list of things to do in 2021.

The Commission strongly posits that investments in cancer control—prevention, detection, diagnosis, surgery, other treatment, and palliative care—are increasingly needed in Guyana, where still a large number of cancer deaths occur without timely diagnosis and without appropriate treatment or palliation. It is unfortunate that in 2021, most of the Essential Cancer Services listed in the third volume of nine in Disease Control Priorities, 3rd edition are still not available in Guyana's public health sector. Interventions included in the package are: prevention of tobacco-related cancer and virus-related liver and cervical cancers; diagnosis and treatment of early breast cancer, cervical cancer, and selected childhood cancers; and widespread availability of palliative care, including opioids. With implementation of an appropriately tailored package, Guyana could substantially reduce suffering and premature death from cancer before 2030, with even greater improvements in later decades.

The Commission, as part of our advocacy on World Cancer Day 2021, reminds our government that for several years now we have not paid close attention to our commitments under the SDGs 2030, particularly those cancer targets under SDG #3. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 (announced on Sept 25, 2015) call for reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by a third through prevention and treatment. Accelerated reductions in cancer mortality are essential to meeting that goal. With more than five years since the SDGs were signed on to, it is time, therefore, for greater commitment being made. One way to demonstrate a new dispensation is for the new government to remedy the neglect. It could do so by adopting the Package of Essential Services and the Package of Best Buys the Commission recommends.

In this regard, in the list of 2021 Initiatives by the Commission, we will submit these recommendations before the end of March 2021. The Commission strongly notes that the full costs of cancer diagnosis and treatment are unaffordable as out-of-pocket payments for most patients in Guyana, so it is an imperative

for the public health sector to cater for cancer services deemed appropriate. Guyana's commitment to Universal Health care (UHC) is not possible without these services.

While our World Cancer Day 2021 Message focuses on diagnostics, treatment and palliative care and the need for government to enable these for citizens who cannot afford any of these, we are not oblivious that cancer can be prevented. Guyana's prevention of cancer initiatives must become more aggressive. In 2021, the Commission will seek to aggressively promote prevention strategies. WE will pursue greater enforcement of the Tobacco legislation and will seek legislative action to prevent abuse of alcohol.

Four preventive measures are on our radar for 2021: tobacco control interventions, HBV vaccination and prevention of alcohol abuse to prevent liver cancer, some form of screening and treatment for precancerous cervical lesions and HPV vaccination to prevent cervical cancer, in addition to treatment of early stage cervical cancer.

Outside of our collaboration with government and the Ministry of Health, in particular, we will ensure greater collaboration with civil society. A number of NGOs have played a major role in promoting prevention and control strategies in Guyana. We commend their efforts and will play a greater role with them to ensure a truly national effort is in place. But the private sector and the trade unions must also play a significant role. This year, the Commission will seek a more comprehensive participation profile in the fight against cancer.

We join with the Caribbean Coalition in Health and Guyana will advocate with our partners in the CCH to have CARICOM recommit to the Port of Spain Declaration 2007. We join with PAHO/WHO, the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), researchers, patients, our sisters and brothers around the world to reaffirm our commitment to achieve the goals of the SDGs and reduce and end the scourge of cancer. We must fight cancer together. That is why we endorse the theme of World cancer Day 2021: "I am and I will". We can all play a role.

Please join the Presidential Commission in transforming the way Guyana fights cancer. We must all become warriors against cancer. Let us dedicate all our efforts towards ensuring that the SDG target of reducing NCDs by one-third by 2030 is achieved.

Dr. Leslie Ramsammy
Chairperson

February 4, 2021