



PRESS RELEASE

World Hypertension Day 2020

Message from the Minister of Health- Hon. Dr. Frank Anthony

May 17, 2021

This year we observe World Hypertension Day on the May 17th under the theme “**Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, and Live Longer**”.

Hypertension, which we commonly call high blood pressure, affects an estimated 1.13 billion persons globally, with more than two-thirds living in low- and middle-income countries. Men are slightly more affected than women. High blood pressure is considered the “silent killer” since it presents with vague symptoms or no symptoms at all. Over time, uncontrolled Hypertension commonly leads to chronic kidney disease, heart disease, stroke, dementia and death. Stroke and ischemic heart disease, arising from hypertension, are consistently among the top three causes of death in Guyana. Alarmingly, fewer than 1 in 5 people with Hypertension are well controlled worldwide. According to the Guyana STEPS Survey conducted in 2016, 18.4% of Guyanese who were found to have raised (high) blood pressure but were not on medication.

Like other developing countries, Guyana is facing many challenges in identifying and caring for patients with Hypertension. With the Pan American Health Organisation/ World Health Organisation’s (PAHO/WHO) support, the Ministry of Health aims to reduce premature death and disability from hypertension and cardiovascular disease and embark on the HEARTS project. HEARTS is the acronym for **H**ealthy lifestyle counselling, **E**vidence-based protocols, **A**ccess to essential medicines and technology, **R**isk based cardiovascular disease management, **T**eam-based care and **S**ystems for monitoring.

HEARTS is fundamentally evidence-based practice in diagnosing and treating arterial hypertension.

Despite the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, work has begun on this transformative project for primary healthcare in keeping with this Government's vision to "develop an adequate, well-trained, competent, and compassionate healthcare workforce.

Nationwide implementation will standardise the diagnosis and treatment of hypertension. Medical practitioners will be more equipped with evidence-based knowledge at the community level. It is an ambitious project which will see the review and procurement of more effective medicines to treat hypertension. The screening services offered to the population will be more efficient allowing for cases to be detected earlier. This will see a lowering of complications and death rates to hypertension. We expect to see significant positive outcomes from this project within two to five years.

As we observe World Hypertension Day, I encourage citizens to learn how to measure their blood pressure, how to control it and, by so doing, live longer. When next you visit your Health Centre, ask your doctor or health care provider to teach you how to measure blood pressure. Make sure that you check your blood pressure regularly to ensure that it is controlled. In addition, if you are on medication for hypertension, make sure that you take your treatment as prescribed by your doctor, avoid skipping your tablets.

To all our health care professionals, I commend your commitment and efforts to ensure that persons with hypertension, are properly diagnosed, managed and controlled. Let us work together to reduce the burden of this disease.

END