

Sunday February 8, 2015

## CGCS OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED

**WOMEN** across the region stand to benefit from the formation of the Caribbean Gynaecological Cancer Society (CGCS), a new organisation bringing together the best minds from the field of obstetrics and gynaecology in the Caribbean, to prevent and treat below the belt cancers.

The umbrella body was officially launched at the Hilton Barbados Resort on Friday night, where Professor Horace Fletcher was named Honorary President of the CGCS at the inaugural two day meeting.

The goal of the CGCS will be to ensure the care offered in the region is standardised, that resources can be shared, and achieving all of this by building capacity in the Caribbean for improved health and cancer control outcomes by transferring skills, education, training and leadership to personnel in the Caribbean region.

This will be done through health systems governance; core infrastructure development, e.g. strengthening the cancer registry; optimising service delivery; improving system performance, and health services research.

Local Chair, Dr. Vikash Chatrani, explained that this is the first organisation bringing together obstetricians and gynaecologists under the auspices of the University of the West Indies.

"We have all four campuses committing to this cause to ensure that the outcomes for the care of our women afflicted with gynaecological cancers are the same as North America. It means that we will have to set guidelines for the care across the region, better our resources, use the personnel in other countries, to come together and make up for our shortfalls using the strength of other



Dean of the Faculty of Medicine Mona Campus Professor Horace Fletcher (right) was named Honorary President of the Caribbean Gynaecological Cancer Society which was official launched on Friday evening. He was presented an award by CGCS Local Chair Dr. Vikash Chatrani (left) and Dr. Ian Bambury both of whom benefited under his tutelage in the field of gynaecological cancers.

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# HPV Vaccine still an option

**MINISTER of Health John Boyce is encouraging parents to take advantage of the Human Papilloma Virus vaccine made available to pre-teenage girls.**

He made the call during the inaugural meeting of the Caribbean Gynaecological Cancer Society on Friday evening, where he pointed out the impact that below the belt cancers are having on the female population.

The Minister acknowledged that there is ongoing battle about the use of

this vaccine which was introduced last year, is not unlike the measles debate going on in the United States. He said these are real issues which must be grappled and therefore depend on the scientists, like those attending the launch of the CGCS, to promote the efficacy of this approach.

“The Ministry of Health has received data for the first year of operation of the cancer component of the Barbados National Registry and this indicates that breast, uterus and cervical cancer are the

leading causes of death from cancer in women and accounts for approximately 49 percent of all cancer deaths.”

Minister Boyce revealed that there were 40 cases of cervical cancer diagnosed ages 30-69 years-in 2011 and 2012 and the Pan American Health Organisation and World Health Organisation have identified the main areas of focus to support cervical cancer prevention including cost effective intervention, such as screening and early detection and immunization schedule

for the prevention of cervical cancer.

He explained that the Strategic Plan for NCDs 2015-2019 which was launched only two weeks ago, gives a road map for prevention and control activities with respect to NCDs and includes specific targets and indicators for cervix, breast and prostate cancers.

The Minister added that the Ministry of Health continues to be aggressive in its approach in respect of tobacco control. “As a result we intend to introduce legislation for pack-

## ...for preteen girls

aging and labelling of all tobacco products at the end of this year.”

He assured that work is continuing to strengthen Barbados’ ability to provide quality chemotherapeutic and radio therapeutic interventions. “In addition the Minister of Health and the Barbados National Registry have fa-

cilitated a comprehensive schedule for continue education of healthcare professionals.”

The many donors to the hospital including those that have facilitated were thanked and the assurance was given that the Ministry of Health will continue to reach out to its partners. (JH)

## Get checked!

### ...older women warned about endometrial cancer

“If our women are dying we need to do something about it.”

This haunting reality and call for action was articulated by Obstetrician, Gynaecologist & the only Gynae-Oncologist on the island Dr. Vikash Chatrani who along with prominent obstetrician, gynaecologist Dr. Wayne Welch are encouraging all women, particularly older women, to acknowledge the real dangers associated with below the belt cancers.

Speaking after the official launch of the Caribbean Gynaecological Cancer Society on Friday night, the doctors explained that while more women are afflicted with breast cancer, more women are actually dying because of below the belt cancers.

Gynaecologic cancer is any cancer that starts in a woman’s reproductive organs and these include cervical, uterine (womb), ovarian, vulval and vaginal cancer.

Dr. Welch explained that in the past incidence of cervical cancer was higher, however with the advent of cervical smears that rate has seen a decrease.

However, he lamented that older women do not believe that they need regular check-ups, as such cases of endometrial cancer (cancer of the womb) are not being detected early.

“If we could actually check older women, come get your checks, ultrasounds, then you can pick up before you even start to bleed that the lining is getting thicker and we can sample it and we could detect endometrial cancer earlier. Instead of these cancers presenting at state three or four then

we can get a stage one where we can cure them.”

“We are living longer. So once you pass 50, don’t hang up your hat. Come and see your doctor. Just like cervical cancer, when you pass 50 come and let us check you to help prevent endometrial and ovarian cancer,” he implored.

The doctors alluded to a case of a 98 year old cancer survivor who received an operation at age 95, even though there were persons suggesting that the patient was too old to receive such an operation and had “already lived a long life.” “Age does not determine if you have lived enough, we give everybody the same treatment.”

However, the doctors stressed that women should not postpone their checks. “Cervical cancer occurs in young women, usually around the age of 30. We want you to come to us before you get cancer. All women are encouraged to visit their doctors and get their pap smear. The older women, get an ultrasound, look at endometrium and check your ovaries.” They caution that any bleeding after menopause is considered abnormal and should be checked.

Dr. Chatrani says there has been a concerted effort to increase awareness and highlighted the work being carried out by the Barbados Cancer Society in this regard. He too lamented that while women may openly talk about mammograms, they are silent when it comes to below the belt cancers. “They want to keep their private parts private.” He said instead they should be more open and encourage their colleagues to get tested. (JH)



**Minister of Health John Boyce (right) shares a light moment with Honorary President of the Caribbean Gynaecological Cancer Society (CGCS) Professor Horace Fletcher (Centre) and CGCS Local Chair Dr. Vikash Chatrani during a reception to mark the official launch of the umbrella body at the Hilton Barbados on Friday evening..**

# Call for support from corporate Barbados to assist initiative

## PREVENTION on Back Page

islands, and ensuring that we get the best outcome for our women,” he explained.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the region. And below the belt women’s cancer is the leading cause of death for women afflicted with cancer.

A number of experts in the field attended the two day meeting, including Professor Denny Depetrillo from the University of Toronto, to chart the future of the as-

sociation. Dr. Chatrani acknowledged that it will be an expensive venture, and called for any support from corporate Barbados to assist in this important initiative. (JH)

# Disasters no joke

## INSURANCE EXECUTIVE TELL GOVT TO TAKE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS MORE SERIOUSLY

An insurance executive has complained that Barbadians are still skimping on property insurance against disaster and, with four months to the 2015 hurricane season, he has lamented the absence of an enforceable building code.

General Manager of Co-operators General Insurance Anton Lovell said most Barbadian householders whose homes are destroyed or damaged by disaster, including fire, have inadequate or no financial protection.

"There were about 100 house fires last year and I could hazard a guess that 75 per cent of these were not insured, and that continues to be a worrying trend for the insurance industry," he told **Barbados TODAY**.

"Another factor is that those persons who are insuring their properties don't have their properties adequately insured, meaning that

they are not insured for the true replacement value."

He said an additional worry was that the island had no legislation supporting its building code.

"That's another concern. Why is it taking so long to become law?" Lovell asked.

"Tomas was just a storm, it wasn't severe, but then we had a lot of damage; too much damage. So you could imagine if a Category One or Two hurricane strikes."

Though the 1993 Barbados Building Code was updated in 2013, the document continues to be unenforceable, leaving builders to set their own standards.

"Government [has] got to take disaster planning more seriously because it could really set back a country some years," Lovell said.

"Disaster preparedness should not be taken lightly . . . It is regrettable that Barbadians are very reactive people."

The insurance executive added: "Disaster preparedness cannot be treated like a political football, like many things in this country. It is a very important area and we are talking about protecting the vulnerable, saving lives, a country's survival, our own survival."

"If a formidable disaster strikes, can you imagine what this will do the Government finances . . . the time it will take this country and citizens to recover." (GA)

NEWS TODAY

# EU official to ensure EPA works

An official of the European Union (EU) is promising to give a listening ear to people who are experiencing challenges in trade between Barbados and Europe under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

Addressing the closing ceremony of the Caribbean Network of Services Coalition (CNSC) at the Courtyard by Marriott recently, Charge d'Affairs of the EU delegation to Barbados and the Eastern

Caribbean Silvia Kofler said it was her aim to ensure that the EPA was working better.

Noting that she was here in a political capacity, Kofler said she was focused on general trade arrangements and cooperation between "this part of the region and Europe".

"Specifically about services, since I have arrived I have heard a lot of criticisms about EPA – it is not working, it is not delivering – but I am trying to understand the challenges," she said.

The EU official said based on her interaction with individuals so far, she understood that "things could take a long time" when firms indicate their interest in trading in the European market.

"One of my objectives would be, during my four year stay here, to see the EPA really working better," she said.

Saying that Martinique had already started discussions to become an associate member to CARICOM, Kofler added that the members of the CNSC had "a distinct responsibility to their respective constituents in relation to the challenges of doing business".

Meanwhile, services specialist at the Caribbean Export Development Agency Allyson Francis told the gathering that the agency had undertaken a range of programmes that should help local and regional service providers access the EU market.

Through access to finance initiatives, Caribbean Export has awarded grants totalling over €1.6 million (BDS\$3.6 million) to 75 firms within the services sector.

In addition, 300 firms have benefited from training and certification programmes, while 377 services sector firms have participated in a series of export promotion and development initiatives.

Besides a range of training and certification programmes, Francis added that for the call for proposals under the 10th European Development Fund private sector development programme 75 firms in the services sector were awarded grants.

"The firms represented 13 CARIFORUM states with 52 per cent being female owned firms," she added. (MM)

# Regional Society to help fight below the belt cancers

As below the belt women's cancers remain one of the leading causes of death in the Caribbean, a regional society has been formed to combat this trend.

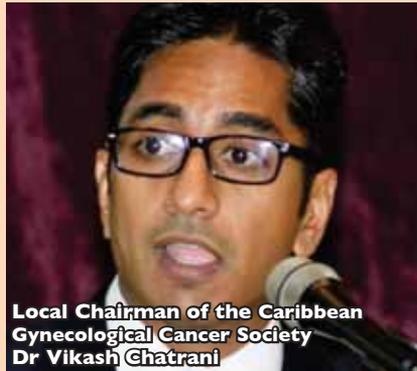
The Caribbean Gynecological Cancer Society has been launched to improve gynecological cancer outcomes in the Caribbean.

The society, which was formed under the auspices of the University of the West Indies and its campuses in Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and the Bahamas, recently hosted its inaugural meeting in Barbados.

Local chair and representative of the society Dr Vikash Chatrani, an obstetrician, gynecologist and the only gynae-oncologist in the island, said the formation of the society's goal would be to ensure the care offered to women with cancer in the region was standardized.

"It means that we are going to have to set guidelines for the care across the region, better our resources, use the personnel that we have to come together and make up for our shortfalls," he explained.

"This is the first professional society where colleagues in the same profession are coming together to put their heads together to fight for women who have been afflicted with these cancers."



Local Chairman of the Caribbean Gynecological Cancer Society Dr Vikash Chatrani

Minister of Health John Boyce who delivered remarks at the event, endorsed the initiative and reiterated Government's commitment to providing support and services to fight cancers in Barbados.

Dean of UWVI's Mona Campus Professor Horace Fletcher, inaugural president of the society, was awarded at the launch for his contribution to the treatment of patients suffering from gynecological cancers and also stimulating interest in this area. (AH)

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# New ally in cancer fight

**THE CARIBBEAN has a new champion in the battle to prevent more women from dying as a result of gynaecologic cancer.**

The Caribbean Gynaecological Cancer Society (CGCS), which was officially launched on Friday night at Hilton Barbados at Needham's Point, St Michael, was established to improve gynaecological cancer outcomes in the Caribbean.

Speaking ahead of the inaugural meetings over the weekend local chair of the CGCS, obstetrician gynaecologist Dr Vikash Chatrani, explained that the vision of the body was to unite the region in the care for women with below the belt cancer. The society, he noted, was the first organisation that brought together obstetricians and gynaecologists under one umbrella and under the auspices of the University of the West Indies.

"It means that we are going to set guidelines for the care across the region, better our resources, use personnel that we have in different countries, come together and make up for our shortfalls," he said.

He said that even though more women were afflicted by breast cancer, more women died as a result of below the belt cancer.

"There are five below the belt cancers – uterine, cervix, ovarian, vulva and vaginal cancer, and if our women are dying we need to do something about it. Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the region and below the belt cancer is the leading cause for our women afflicted with cancer," Dr Chatrani said.

The society currently comprises four main campuses: Mona, St Augustine and Cave Hill as well as The Bahamas, working closely with

Professor Denny De Patrillo from the University of Toronto. However, Dr Chatrani noted they were desirous of involving the rest of the Caribbean in order for people to have access to the expertise.

Honorary president, Professor Horace Fletcher, said he believed it was a positive preventative step.

Fletcher said that for many years and meeting after meeting, the Caribbean had unsuccessfully tried to get a screening programme together for cancer of the cervix.

"It has been a really long and arduous fight. Now that we seem to be very cohesive and together and we have the backing of special people like [Professor Denny De Petrillo] who fought and fought until he got us all together . . . I am very hopeful that this will make a huge difference," he said. (SDB Media)



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**PROFESSOR HORACE FLETCHER (right) receiving his Honorary President designation from local chair of the CGCS and vice-president of the Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners, Dr Vikash Chatrani, along with gynaecologic consultant at the University of the West Indies Mona campus, Ian Bambury.** (Picture by Christoff Griffith.)



## Boyce urges use of HPV vaccine

MINISTER OF HEALTH John Boyce has once again implored parents to safeguard the lives of their daughters by consenting to the human papilloma virus vaccine (HPV).

HPV is a virus spread through sexual contact, and experts believe the HPV vaccines can guard against cervical cancer.

“We recognise the growing battle that we have with those who, for one reason or another, do not want to recommend the use of vaccination, typically the situation now existing in the United States of America. These are real issues which we have to grapple with and certainly we depend on scientists like yourselves to promote the efficiencies of this kind of approach,” Boyce said as he addressed a group of medical practitioners at the launch of the Caribbean Gynaecologic Cancer Society on Friday night.

He said Government remained committed to developing and partnering in strategies that would prevent cervical cancer. He again encouraged parents of pre-teenage girls to take advantage of the opportunity of the free vaccination to protect them against the development of such cancer later on in life.

The HPV vaccine is a series of three shots over six months given to protect against HPV infection and other problems that HPV can cause.

While the HPV vaccine has been touted for pre-teen girls, there has been growing concern about its safety, and some countries have already stopped administering it to young girls.

Boyce said the World Health Organisation indicated that up to 40 per cent of cancers were preventable using simply lifestyle interventions. He said his ministry would therefore be continuing with educational outreach programmes to promote exercise and healthy eating, which could reduce cancer risks.

“Barbados is committed to offering a range of preventative, diagnostic and therapeutic services for all persons at risk of and who unfortunately have been diagnosed with cancer. We continue to work towards strengthening our ability to recognise human therapeutic and radio therapeutic interventions. In addition, the Ministry of Health and the Barbados National Registry have facilitated a comprehensive schedule for continued education of health care professionals. The Ministry of Health will continue therefore to reach out to partners to foster relations to assist with the improvement of health care in Barbados and especially with the management of cancers,” Boyce added. (SDB Media)

# Women must 'check more'

**NOT ENOUGH women over 50 are getting their routine gynaecological checks, a risk that is leading to more of them having endometrial cancer, warned doctors.**

Senior gynaecologist at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Dr Wayne Welch said an increased number of women are being diagnosed with endometrial cancer.

Speaking to the media after the launch of the Caribbean Gynaecologic Cancer Society (CGCS) on Friday night at Hilton Barbados, Welch said that the numbers were now greater than those of cervical cancer, which has been decreasing because of cervical smears.

Welch noted that Barbadians were now living longer so he urged women to continue to get regular check-ups even after they have passed 50.

“Let us check you and just like cervical cancer, help to prevent endometrial and ovarian cancer. Come to see the doctor, get your checks, get your ultrasounds then, before you even start to bleed, we can pick up that the lining is growing thicker and then we can sample it and detect endometrial cancer earlier. Instead of these cancers presenting at stage three [or stage four] which is late. Where we can get at stage one and cure then . . . stage three or four is just palliative surgery or palliative treatment,” he said.

Local chair of the CGCS, Vikash Chatrani, stressed the seriousness of women increasing their awareness as well as developing a relationship with their doctors.

Chatrani maintained that there were strategies to detect cancer early but that could only be achieved through regular check-ups for below the waist cancers, that is uterine, cervix, ovarian, vulva and vaginal cancer.

He underscored that one of the major issues faced was that, unlike a mammogram, women were shy about discussing their private parts with close friends

and family. And he urged women to therefore encourage their friends or colleagues to get tested and not wait until they noticed bleeding or other symptoms post menopause.

Chatrani said that while a pap smear can pick up an abnormality in the cervix that if treated could prevent cervical cancer, it wasn't the lone solution as there were other strategies such as the HPV vaccine, which was shown to reduce abnormal pap smears.

“Sometimes you think when you had an examination below you had everything; everything is checked and everything is good. But unless they know there are five different cancers down there and pap smears only pick up one – you need to check the others. There are signs and symptoms that may tell you things are going wrong,” he said.

Chatrani further warned that cervical cancer could affect women of all ages and he stressed there was not an age limit as to who could receive treatment for the disease.

“Women are encouraged to get pap smears at any age . . . A lot of women come to us ‘only when I lift something heavy I get bleeding down below so I really don't study it’, but any bleeding [post menopause] is abnormal so visit your gynaecologists, get tested, have yearly check-ups and you can live a long life,” said Chatrani. (SDB Media)

Please see also Page 16A.

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Cancers are the second leading cause of death in the region  
*(according to CARPHA – Caribbean Regional Public Health Authority)*

*Gynecologic cancer* is any cancer that starts in a woman's reproductive organs and these include cervical, uterine (womb), ovarian, vulval and vaginal cancer.

Unfortunately all cases of these below the belt women's cancers cannot be prevented and our women will require treatment.

The Caribbean Gynecologic Cancer Society will be hosting its inaugural meeting in Barbados this weekend on February 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> at the Clinical Skills building in the Faculty of Medical Sciences and at the Hilton Barbados.

The society is being launched to improve gynaecological cancer outcomes in the Caribbean and to close the gap between the Caribbean and outcomes in Canada and North America.

The society has been formed under the auspices of the University of the West Indies and its campuses in Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Bahamas.

The local chair and representative of the society Dr Vikash Chatrani who is an Obstetrician, Gynaecologist & the only Gynae-Oncologist in the island will be hosting delegates from the region and internationally. Faculty from Jamaica, Bahamas, Canada and as far as Ireland have converged on

the island to partake in two scientific sessions and a cocktail reception which will host key players from the region involved in the care of women with gynecologic cancer. (see attached program)

This is an important event for the region as it brings the care of our women afflicted with below the belt women's cancer under an umbrella body whose goal will be to ensure the care offered in the region is standardized, that resources can be shared, and achieve all of this by building capacity in the Caribbean for improved health and cancer control outcomes by transferring skills, education, training and leadership to personnel in the Caribbean region through:

- health systems governance,
- core infrastructure development eg strengthening the cancer registry
- optimize service delivery
- improving system performance, and
- health services research

We have seen improvements in the delivery of Gynaecologic cancer care in Barbados with the formation of the specialist service at the QEH in October 2012.

We are educating our women about these below the belt women cancer's with awareness initiatives like "Globe-athon Barbados – the walk to end womens cancers" which started in September 2013. The Sagicor sponsored event in 2014 attracted near two thousand participants.

This is the next initiative to get the professionals together in the fight against women's cancer

## Special Thanks

We wish to thank UWI & the support of  
Dean Branday (Barbados), Dean Fletcher (Jamaica),  
Dean Ramsewak (Trinidad) & Dean Roberts (Bahamas)  
for the planning & creation of the CGCS.

### **MEMBERS**

#### **Bahamas**

Dr. Raleigh Butler  
Dr. Darron Halliday  
Dr. Hubert Minnis (Hon.)  
Dr. Bernard Nottage (Hon.)

#### **Barbados**

Dr. Vikash Chatrani  
Dr. Garth McIntyre  
Dr. Hugh Thomas  
Dr. Wayne Welch

#### **Jamaica**

Prof. Horace Fletcher  
Dr. Ian Bambury  
Dr. Diana English (Candidate)  
Dr. Joseph Hall (Hon.)  
Dr. Carole Rattray  
Dr. Paul Mitchell  
Dr. Rudolph Stevens  
Dr. Matthew Taylor  
Dr. Anna-Kay Taylor Christmas  
Prof. Hugh Wynter (Hon.)

#### **Trinidad & Tobago**

Dr. Vishal Bahall (Candidate)  
Dr. Tim Gopeesingh (Hon.)  
Dr. Vanessa Harry  
Dr. Gordon Narayansingh  
Dr. Wayne Quinland (Candidate)

#### **International**

Prof. Denny De Petrillo  
Prof. Michael Fung Kee Fung



# Caribbean Gynecologic Cancer Society INAUGURAL MEETING

*FEBRUARY 6-7, 2015*  
*BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS*



## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6<sup>TH</sup>

### Venue – UWI Clinical Skills Bldg. Seminar Rm.

Session Chair: Professor Horace Fletcher

- |         |  |  |
|---------|--|--|
| 2:00 PM | Welcome  | Dr. Wayne Welch                                      |
| 2:05 PM | Introduction   | Society Head, Session Chair<br>Prof. Horace Fletcher |
| 2:10 PM | Where We Are Now – Trinidad  | Dr. Gordon Naryansingh                               |
| 2:30 PM | Where We Are Now – Jamaica   | Dr. Ian Bambury                                      |
| 2:50 PM | Where We Are Now – Bahamas   | Dr. Darron Halliday                                  |
| 3:10 PM | Where We Are Now – Barbados  | Dr. Vikash Chatrani                                  |
| 3:30 PM | Open Discussion – Society Objectives, Plans & Goals  |  |
| 4:30 PM | Adjourn (Steering Committee to remain)   |  |
| 5:00 PM | Steering Committee   |  |
| 7:00 PM | <b>Cocktail Reception</b><br><b>Hilton Hotel, Alcove &amp; Garrison rm.</b>  |  |
|         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Honourable John Boyce, MoH</li> <li>• Dr Dexter James, CEO QEH</li> <li>• Honorary President Award</li> </ul> |  |

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY

### Venue – Barbados Hilton, Garrison Rm.

- |          |  |  |
|----------|--|--|
| 9:00 AM  | Welcome – Local Chair  | Dr. Vikash Chatrani                    |
| 9:05 AM  | Welcome  | Dr. Raleigh Butler                     |
| 9:10 AM  | Opening Address  | Dean UWI Cave Hill<br>Prof. J. Branday |
| 9:15 AM  | President Inaugural Lecture  | Prof. Horace Fletcher                  |
| 9:45 AM  | TALK – “Minimally Invasive Surgery in Obese/Elderly Patients”                | Dr. Samar Nahas, Toronto               |
| 10:15 AM | TALK – “Caribbean Standards for Radiation Therapy Delivery”                  | Dr. Tom McGowan, Nassau                |
| 10:45 AM | <i>COFFEE BREAK</i>  |  |
| 11:00 AM | TALK – “Surgical Management of Cervical Cancer – Decision Making Strategies” | Dr. Ian Harley, Belfast                |
| 11:30 AM | “Where We Need To Be”  |  |
| 12:00 PM | Business Meeting   |  |

### **Lunch/ADJOURNMENT**