

April 28th, 2014

M E D I A R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CARPHA's 59th Caribbean Health Research Conference addresses Non-communicable Diseases as a Health and Economic Development Priority

Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, April 28, 2014. Chronic non-communicable diseases (CNCDs) remain a major cause for concern in the Region as the prevalence and mortality rates in the Caribbean are among the highest in the world, and the costs are not sustainable to families, business and government. For this reason, ***NCDs – Through the Life Course*** has been chosen as the theme for the 59th Caribbean Public Health Agency's (CARPHA) Health Research Conference in Aruba this year.

Conference Chairman and Director of Research at CARPHA, Dr. Donald Simeon, reveals that within CARICOM member states, the major causes of mortality continue to be dominated by CNCDs: Heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and stroke and hypertension as a co-morbidity. Annually, he says, these chronic diseases account for approximately 60% of all deaths in the Region. Further, they are a major cause and effect of poverty, and rising health care costs due to NCDs are placing huge fiscal strains on Ministries of Health and Finance, yet they are mostly preventable.

In addition, recent surveys conducted have shown a steady increase in overweight and obese children in the Caribbean. Dr. Simeon explains that the Region's ability to respond to this challenge is important, as obesity underlies a number of chronic diseases including diabetes, high blood pressure, hypercholesterolemia and cardiovascular diseases, as well as mental health problems and additional costs to the health sector.

In light of this, A Research to Policy meeting which focuses on “Achieving healthy weights among children and adolescents in the Caribbean – Moving from research to policy to action”, jump starts the Conference on Wednesday 30th April. Use of legislation to create healthier environments and reduce obesity and NCDs will be among the areas of action to be discussed. A joint CARPHA/University of the West Indies (UWI) preparatory session on “*Economic Dimensions of NCDs*” will also be held with Caribbean Chief Medical Officers, CARICOM, the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) and the University of Washington.

The Awards Banquet is another key feature of the Caribbean Health Research Conference which, this year, has attracted over 200 participants including health researchers, doctors, nurses, nutritionists, medical students and policy advisors from around the Region. 2014 will see awards being presented to Professor Affette Mc-Caw-Binns for Outstanding Achievement in Reproductive Health Research and Epidemiology, and Professor Frederick Hickling for Outstanding Achievement in the area of Psychiatric Research. There will also be a Young Researcher of the Year Award based on presentations made during the Conference.

For further information on the 59th CARPHA Health Research Conference, persons may visit www.carpha.org or contact the Conference Secretariat at the Renaissance Aruba Resort and Casino.

####



**Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)
Communications Unit**

16-18 Jamaica Boulevard, Federation Park, Port of Spain
Trinidad and Tobago

Tel: (868) 622 4261

Fax: (868) 622 2792

www.carpha.org