

6th May 2021

Rotary District 7030 supports Front of Package Labelling

Caribbean countries continue to face a growing challenge of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The Caribbean Region has the highest burden of NCDs in the Region of the Americas. NCDs are responsible for six of the top ten leading causes of death in the region. This represents a significant impact on the lives of families and individuals and also a significant burden on the health sector especially at a time when health sectors across the region are challenged responding to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The common underlying risk factors contributing to this are poor diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use, and alcohol abuse. Across the Region, measures are continuously being implemented to tackle this problem. However, current policies and programs do not sufficiently focus on prevention and could be improved with a multisectoral and coordinated approach.


In response to strengthening multisectoral support and collaboration, Rotary District 7030 has engaged in various projects across the Caribbean. The latest is the Childhood Obesity Prevention Project that is implemented in 12 countries with an aim to help to build awareness and action around this disease to halt the increase. We recognized that Childhood Obesity is increasing and presents a serious challenge to the Caribbean Region.

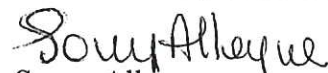
Lack of breastfeeding and high intake of sugar-sweetened beverages are some of the main dietary factors contributing to obesity development in the Caribbean.

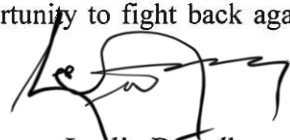
One way to promote healthy eating is by promoting front-of-pack nutrition labelling to promote healthier diets. The WHO recommends Member States implement front-of-pack (FOP) nutrition labels to guide consumers towards healthier food choices, as part of comprehensive strategies to prevent diet-related non-communicable diseases. Moreover, a recent study conducted by the Ministry of Health and Wellness of Jamaica, the University of Technology, Jamaica, and the Pan American Health Organization provided evidence that the use of octagonal warning labels group enables customers to make better food choices. The study showed that consumers shown the octagonal warning labels had the highest chances: of correctly identifying when products were excessive in sugars, sodium or saturated fats; of correctly identifying the least harmful option; and of choosing the least harmful or none of the products more often.

This is a significant study for the Caribbean region and supports the conclusion that the current CROSQ proposal for a subregional standard on FOPL, which includes octagonal warning labels, provides the best option available for the population.

Rotary District 7030 endorses this important finding and calls on countries to support the implementation of FOPL with octagonal warning labels. This presents an opportunity to fight back against obesity and NCDs by promoting better choices and ultimately better health.


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