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Welcome to the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) Electronic Newsletter. The main objective of this newsletter is to improve communication within our network as we highlight our news and activities. You can send your suggestions and comments to: postmaster@carec.paho.org.

CAREC Council Meets



The XXXVI Council meeting of the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) was held in Trinidad and Tobago at the Elisha Tikasingh Lecture Theatre, CAREC, July 14-15, 2011. The meeting was chaired by Professor E. Nigel Harris, Vice Chancellor, University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona, Jamaica. The council members in attendance

were: Dr. Socorro Gross-Galiano, Assistant Director, Pan American Health

Organization (PAHO); Dr. Beryl Irons, the CAREC Director; Dr. Rhonda Sealey–Thomas, Chief Medical Officer, Antigua and Barbuda; The Honourable Pablo Marin, Minister of Health, Belize; Honourable Julius Timothy, Minister of Public Health, Dominica; Dr. Eva Lewis-Fuller, Chief Medical Officer, Jamaica; Dr. Sirving Keli, Director of Health, Curacao; Dr. Anton Cumberbatch, Chief Medical Officer, Trinidad and Tobago; Dr. Rudolph Cummings, Programme Manager, Health Sector Development, CARICOM Secretariat and Dr. Donald Simeon, Director, Caribbean Health Research Council also participated in the meeting.

Dr. Bernadette Theodore-Gandi, the PAHO/WHO Representative to Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Ernest Pate, the Caribbean Program Coordinator (CPC/PAHO/Barbados), Dr. Jean-Marc Gabastou, Regional PAHO Advisor for Public Health Laboratory Services, Dr. Amalia Del Riego, Senior Advisor, PAHO HIV Caribbean Office (PHCO), Mr. Scott Shauf, legal officer (PAHO/HQ) and the President of CAREC’s Staff Association (CASA) were in attendance at the meeting as observers.

The Assistant PAHO Director, Dr. Socorro Gross-Galiano, welcomed the Ministers of Health and other delegates and observers and thanked them for their attendance. She thanked the host country for the continued support and further stated that although the countries are experiencing difficult economic times there is the need to protect gains and move forward. The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) was signed 10 days before the Council meeting making it a legal entity. Dr. Gross commented that the recommendations from this 36th Council are critical for the transitioning of CAREC to CARPHA, without loss of any services. She thanked Professor Harris for continuing to be chairman and looked forward to his continued guidance at this Council.

The meeting focused on the report of the Centre for the year 2010 as the Director and Administrator of CAREC outlined the strategies used to accomplish the mandate given via the council resolutions of 2009. Also presented was an update of CARPHA which helped to give prospective as to the way forward for CAREC as it continues to prepare for transition.

The meeting ended with members formulating resolutions that would ensure that CAREC continues to function cohesively and systematically.

Support to Member Countries



The Centre has made progress in implementing the objectives outlined in the biennial work plan while adapting to meet the needs of its stakeholders within the limitation of its resources. The Director, CAREC in her presentation of the report, acknowledged the collaboration and team spirit of the staff towards meeting objectives. The

report highlighted major changes since the last Council meeting as well as achievements, priorities for 2011-2012 and challenges faced by the Centre.

Summary of main achievements and challenges of the Centre: The Business Continuity Plan for the Center (BCP) has been completed. The plan outlines the strategy for keeping the Centre functioning in times of crises;

The Regional Advisor for Communicable diseases (Vector borne diseases) has been transferred to Costa Rica but still offers technical cooperation to the countries and has responded to several requests of CAREC member countries;

The achievements of the Centre in the areas of communicable and non-communicable diseases (CDs and NCDs) included capacity building with member countries for planning, implementation and analysis of risk factor surveys for chronic diseases and strengthening disease registries such as tuberculosis and cancers. Burden of illness studies have been completed and others initiated as well as technology transfer for laboratory investigation of diarrheal diseases. Surveillance for the NCDs has been strengthened through the implementation of routine reporting of a minimum data set and in improvement in receipt of mortality data from 16 countries. CAREC was able to submit of 28 years of mortality data from 16 countries to PAHO for inclusion in the PAHO regional database for the Americas. Surveillance for communicable diseases together with the appropriate laboratory service was strengthened in countries together with the laboratories of over 60% of countries having the capacity for sub-typing selected pathogens.

The technical cooperation the Centre offered to member countries for respiratory illness surveillance has resulted in additional countries having the capacity to do PCR investigation for influenza. HIV case based surveillance is being implemented in countries and some countries have already submitted data.

Administrative Viewpoint



The administrative and financial report focused on the achievements and issues of its sectional areas (human resources, general services and maintenance, information technology system, procurement, security and safety) as well as the support and activities generated from the Headquarters. In addition to technical experts to assist with the external communication plan, visit was also made by one of the PAHO

internal auditors as part of the evaluation of PAHO offices. Several policies were developed in the human resource unit. During the Council meeting, CAREC's General Services Manager Ms Catherine Eastman, received a PAHO leadership award in recognition of her exceptional leadership and contribution to the work of the organization.

The implementation of the CAREC's Internal Communication Plan resulted in "We Connect" initiative which was launched with a staff retreat and a staff blog. The External Communication Plan was developed with the technical cooperation of Knowledge Management and Communication at PAHO, Headquarters. The channels being used to communicate more effectively with our external audiences are CAREC eNewsletter, Facebook and optimizing the use of website. A new video about CAREC has been done and the History of CAREC is to be written.

During 2011, the work is focused on preparation for transition, increasing efficiency through simplification and standardization of processes (which will result in additional cost saving benefits for CAREC), improving security in the facilities, and developing competencies among the staff.

More About CAREC

Want to know more about CAREC? View our institutional video here:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/pahopin?feature=mhum#p/c/A2B0408A3C182733/0/M2HWj9WYAeg>