

Caribbean Public Health Agency

Monthly Bulletin¹

No. 8: August 2009

The participation of the CARPHA Project Manager in the 34th CAREC Council meeting, and a meeting via teleconference of the CARPHA Steering Committee were the main activities, since the release of the last Bulletin.

CAREC 34th Council Meeting

The CARPHA Project Manager, Dr. Jerome Walcott attended and made a presentation at the 34th CAREC Council Meeting, which was held in Trinidad on the 20th and 21st of July. His presentation was well received, and he was able to provide an update to participants, and some members of CAREC staff on the progress, which had been made towards the establishment of CARPHA. Following the update there was an extensive and useful discussion about CARPHA, and the inherent transition issues that were likely to arise. In addition much focus was placed on the role CAREC would be expected to play, during the transition period.

Emanating from the discussion, it was felt that there was an urgent need to identify the short, medium and long term improvements; which would be needed at CAREC to allow it to become the module of CARPHA, for Public Health Surveillance, epidemiology and laboratory support. This included the necessary human resources, equipment, technology and infrastructure.

The meeting also agreed that there needed to be further dialogue between PAHO/CAREC, the CARPHA Project Management Team and representatives of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago; so as to facilitate the smooth transition of CAREC's functions to CARPHA. These sentiments were also expressed in the Resolutions prepared at the end of the Meeting.

The Project Manager also took the opportunity to tour CAREC, and gain firsthand information on the state of its facilities. In addition he interacted with some of the staff members, regarding their concerns about CAREC and the transition to CARPHA.

CARPHA Steering Committee Meeting

A meeting of the CARPHA Steering Committee was convened via teleconference on Tuesday 4th, August; at the request of the Chairman, Dr. Leslie Ramsammy the Minister of Health of Guyana. This meeting was held to update members of the Committee on activities which had taken place since the 4th Steering Committee Meeting.

¹ This and previous bulletins may be found on the CARICOM and PAHO websites: www.caricom.org and www.paho.org

The Project Manager gave an overview of the strategic planning meeting, held in Barbados and explained how the information gathered would assist with the costing process. He spoke of his participation in the 34th CAREC Council Meeting, and indicated that the costing had not been completed at the end of July as anticipated. Dr. Greene informed the meeting of the support for CARPHA, which was expressed by the CARICOM Heads of Government at their recent meeting; as well as the proposed timetable for its implementation. He also indicated that a meeting with Minister Narace and other officials of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago will be arranged in the near future, to discuss the details of that Government's hosting of CARPHA.

Teleconference with the UK Department of Public Health

Dr. Edward Greene, Dr. Bernadette Theodore-Gandi and the Project Manager, participated in this teleconference with representatives of the UK Department of Health. During which the Project Manager gave an update on CARPHA activities and an overview of the Strategic Planning workshop; answers were provided to questions and queries raised by the UK participant.

The discussion then focused on identifying possible technical assistance that could be provided towards the establishment of CARPHA. It was agreed that the services of a social marketing consultant, would be provided by the UK Department of Public Health, to assist with the development of a social marketing strategy/plan for CARPHA. The representatives of that Department also indicated a willingness to assist the Project Management Team, in its preparation for the proposed Donors Meeting.

In addition it was recommended that a meeting should be convened between representatives of the Project Management Team, and the UK Health Protection Agency (UK-HPA), to discuss possible areas of collaboration in the process of the establishment of CARPHA. It was felt that this would be particularly useful, especially in terms of the issues involved in the central administration of a number of dispersed facilities; which CARPHA is likely to be at its inception, and which can draw on the experience of the UK-PHA.

Costing of CARHA

The costing of CARPHA has not been completed; but it is expected that the report will be ready and circulated in advance of the Caucus of CARICOM Health Ministers, scheduled for September.

Upcoming activities

The 5th CARPHA Steering Committee Meeting is scheduled to be held in Washington DC, on Friday 25th September, this will be followed by the CARICOM Health Ministers Caucus on the 26th and 27th of September.

Dr. Jerome X. Walcott
Project Manager CARPHA