

UKOTs Public Health Programme Newsletter

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Welcome! This publication provides updates for colleagues and partners across UKHSA, OHID and the Overseas Territories. If you have any queries, feedback or contributions please contact: UKOTs.Programme@ukhsa.gov.uk

Partner Spotlight: Revitalizing Tourism in the Caribbean: Relaunch of CARPHA's Regional Tourism and Health Program in TCI **Contribution by CARPHA**

As the most tourism-dependent region worldwide, travel and tourism are extensively embedded in many of the Caribbean countries' operations, particularly as it relates to economic activity. The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated the devastating effects of disease outbreaks on the tourism industry, highlighting the interconnectedness between the health and tourism sectors and thus, the vulnerability of the region's tourism industries. The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) through its Regional Tourism and Health Program (THP) continues to partner with CARPHA Member States to integrate health into tourism for healthier safer more sustainable tourism.

The Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) was one of the first countries to commit to the THP Program with its launch in June 2016. With the momentum dwindling, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the THP revisited TCI in July 2023 with the aim of revitalizing the Program focusing on strengthening visitor-based surveillance as well as environmental and laboratory surveillance related to foodborne diseases. During this in-country visit, key activities included: capacity building and sensitization on: Early Warning and Response Systems (EWRS) i.e Tourism and Health Information System (THIS) and its maritime counterpart, the Caribbean Vessel Surveillance System (CVSS); training in Infectious Disease Prevention and Control for the Hospitality Sector, Regional Guidelines, Hospitality Health, Safety and Environmental Sanitation Standards and Food Safety.



Additionally, the team conducted assessments of the Food Safety Systems and laboratories across the country. Supported by TCI Ministers of Health and Tourism, they indicated that the Program would undoubtedly strengthen their tourism product and health systems whilst giving the country added competitive advantage and economic resilience.

Project AgeWise: Addressing the Information Gap in Montserrat's Aging Population

Relections by Abbie Harrison

Reflecting upon my deployment to Montserrat, a highlight was a partnership project with the Department of Social Services. Montserrat is witnessing a significant demographic transition. As the senior population expands, there's an increased need for informed policies addressing their distinct requirements. Given existing knowledge gaps, project "AgeWise" aspires to collate insights directly from Montserrat's seniors.

The project aims to: gather evidence to inform decisions and craft elder-centric policies; identify health and social service gaps affecting older residents; and advocate for a Public Health Research agenda spotlighting health risks to the elderly. A tri-phase methodology was adopted to create an all-encompassing survey tool to assess the needs of the senior population. Our focus spanned; infrastructure, health and healthcare services, social environment, independence, and economic stability. A pivotal element of the approach was data collection training sessions in partnership with representatives from community groups, including the Red Cross, Catholic Church, Rastafarian Society, Action Group HQ, and local Police. A note of gratitude is due to our community volunteers, whose commitment to ethics, respect, and collaboration enriched the project at every stage.

With assistance from the Census Department to identify the number of eligible households in Davy Hill, the pilot survey was executed. The region's seniors showcased a strong interest in the initiative with 61 participating and only 11 choosing to opt out. Following this success, the next phase for Project AgeWise is a nationwide rollout. This expansion signifies a pivotal step in ensuring that every village of Montserrat benefits from the insights and advancements the project aims to bring about.



UKOTs Environmental Lab Exchange

The UKOTs Programme recently facilitated a knowledge exchange between environmental lab colleagues in Anguilla and Cayman. The intention was to promote partnership working between Anguilla and Cayman Islands to facilitate strengthening of both laboratories. There were several advantages to be gained through shared learning, procedures and training, which accelerated development of capacity and quality management systems. Additionally this partnership approach addressed economies of scale in the laboratories. After these initial visits it is envisaged partnership working will continue for the mutual benefit of both laboratories with a view to obtain ISO 17025 accreditation water testing in the first instance.



NCD Register surveillance system strengthening

The programme commissioned University of West Indies (UWI) to conduct a project on NCD Register surveillance system strengthening in the UKOTs. Eight UKOTs were interested at the start of this project. UWI conducted a feasibility and readiness assessment as part of the process and criteria to identify two UKOTs for greater in-depth registry development. We are pleased to announce that St Helena and Anguilla demonstrated the greatest degree of readiness and will continue to work with UWI on their registries development. UWI will provide advice on next steps for registry development for each of the other engaged UKOTs.

Network Spotlight: UKOT Laboratory Network

The most recent UKOT Laboratory meeting was held in August, with attendees from six of the UKOTs. John Lee and Matthew Dryden led discussions on evaluating the BioFire diagnostic kit, verification approaches and future emerging threats of different infectious diseases across the regions. There was great engagement with the topic by attendees, with opportunities for problem solving between different UKOT Laboratories.

Please contact UKOTs.programme@ukhsa.gov.uk if you would like to be added to this network.