

Welcome

This publication provides updates for colleagues and partners across UKHSA and the Overseas Territories

If you have any queries, feedback or contributions please contact: UKOTs.Programme@ukhsa.gov.uk

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Happy Holidays from the UKOTs Public Health Strengthening Programme!

As we close out another year, we wanted to take a moment to express our sincere gratitude for your continued partnership and support throughout 2024.

Your collaboration has been critical to making this another successful and enjoyable year; from the CMO conference in June and the Fundamentals of Epidemiology Training in July, to the recent Caribbean Regional Vector-Borne Disease Workshop.

We look forward to working with you in 2025. Wishing you a joyous holiday season and a happy New Year!



Network Spotlight: Health Promotion

The UKOTs Health Promotion Network brings together colleagues working in Health Promotion and Health Improvement from across the UKOTs, aiming to provide a safe forum for discussing challenges, sharing best practices, peer support, and professional development opportunities. The Network meets virtually every 2 months and we have covered a diverse range of topics this year!

In February, we held our first network call of the year on health improvement research needs, where we discussed barriers and facilitators to research in the UKOTs. The next call was in April where we discussed priority topics for the network and had an update from each territory on the current work and priorities. In June, we had a great session from Daniel Cavanagh, a teacher and researcher in Bermuda who presented his work on youth mental health in Bermuda, and Sunita Sturup-Toft from the UKOT programme presented on public health approaches to violence prevention. We collaborated with UKHSA's Immunisation Programmes, Design, Implementation and Clinical Guidance Department in September, on health promotion resources, messaging, and campaigns. And in recent months we have had fantastic presentations from Joddy Harvey on the "Let's Move Turks and Caicos" movement; and from Tara Murphy and Annette Murphy on "Research on mental health and resilience in children and young people living in remote geographical places is rare and typically focused to date on large land masses rather than remote islands".

It's been a packed year of learning and sharing, and we thank everyone who has contributed and attended -we look forward to the next! For more information or to join the Health Promotion Network, please contact ukots.programme@ukhsa.gov.uk.

Vector Borne Disease Workshop in Cayman Islands

Last month, UKHSA partnered with the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Government of the Cayman Islands to host the Regional Mosquito-Borne Diseases Workshop on 'Networking for Improved Responsiveness' in Grand Cayman.

The workshop provided a unique platform for frontline public health workforce and key stakeholders in the Caribbean region to discuss the challenges of, and find solutions to, the increasing threat of dengue and other arboviral diseases. The workshop programme included sessions on epidemiology, lab diagnostics, vector control, and networking initiatives to protect human health from the threat of vector-borne diseases, with UKHSA delegates chairing and presenting alongside their Caribbean colleagues.

An atmosphere of collaboration and integration was forged over the sharing of food, with delegates sharing all nine meals across the three days together, both within the hotel and across a variety of local establishments offering Caribbean cuisine. Old friendships were renewed, and new professional relationships forged, over an engaging, enlightening, and ultimately successful workshop.



Shared learning and exchange at the UK Overseas Territories Disaster Management Conference and Counter Pollution & Oil Spill Response Workshop

The Chemical Hazards and Poisons Team and the Behavioural Science and Insights Unit recently supported the FCDO and Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) Disaster Management Conference and Counter Pollution & Oil Spill Response Workshop, which was held from 25th to 29th November. The event brought together over fifty participants from disaster management, environmental agencies, and governors offices from across the OTs, the majority of which joined in person in Miami. The event was attended by neighbouring Caribbean countries and agencies including from the Dutch Caribbean, the Caribbean Marine Environment Protection Association (CARIBMEPA), and the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme.

The Chemicals team contributed to the event through a number of interactive sessions presenting the role of chemical hazards and public health in both disaster and maritime scenarios (including waste management, oil spill and chemicals management tools). The team also supported the day long MCA organised exercise on coastline response to a non-oil maritime pollution incident; contributing on public health issues for consideration in the event of incidents involving hazardous substances. Participants were also invited to join the UKOT Environmental Public Health Network where resources, learning opportunities and collaborations can continue. Nick Gent, CMO of the Cayman Islands also presented on safe ways of working for human health including a focus on PPE, which the team support with discussion around incident zoning, decontamination and other health protection actions in the event of a chemical incident.

The Behavioural science team contributed remotely through an interactive session on human health and disaster management alongside the FCDO. Content included debunking common disaster myths, the importance of evidence-based approach to communication for public engagement, as well as application of tools and resources.

The event was also an opportunity for the three ISF Civil Resilience Programme partners to come together and pool expertise and resources in one event. For further information please contact lydia.izon-cooper@ukhsa.gov.uk.



Initiation of the HPV prevalence study in Montserrat

In October, the UKHSA UKOTs team visited the emerald isle of Montserrat to support the launch of a Human Papillomavirus (HPV) prevalence study in collaboration with the Montserrat Ministry of Health and Social Services. The UKHSA team included UK-FETP fellow Caroline Harris, and Petra Manley and John Lee from the UKOTs team.

Prior to the visit, the UKHSA and Montserrat team ('the study team') had been meeting regularly over Teams calls to plan and prepare for the study; including developing a sampling strategy, drafting of study materials, and ordering of laboratory consumables.

During the visit the study team provided training to study field recruiters; assisted with verification and quality control of the assay in the laboratory; and promoted the study by appearing live on ZJB Radio's Talking Health show! Once all preparations and trainings were complete, the study was launched, and on 30th October the first women were enrolled into the study.

The study will be running for 6 weeks, with analysis of results taking place in the new year. This is the first time that HPV testing have been carried out on the island, and with the offer of self-testing it is hoped that the study will provide evidence to inform the implementation of a national cervical screening programme on the island that will benefit all women in Montserrat.



The UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) Programme has been ongoing since 2016 and is funded by the Integrated Security Fund (ISF) through the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). UKHSA is the implementing partner.