



## MINISTRY ADVOCATES FOR THE PREVENTION OF MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE

**M**eningococcal is a rare but serious disease that can be prevented provided it's detected and treated early. This is the key message advocated by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services in its efforts to reach out to the general public and raise awareness on the prevention of meningococcal disease.

The Health Minister, Hon. Rosy Akbar also spoke about the meningococcal prevention strategies to the communities she visited in Tavua and Rakiraki last week. The communities that received this information have thanked the Health Ministry for its outreach awareness programs that enables them to have firsthand information about the meningococcal disease and the steps they can take to prevent it.

Families have been advised to familiarise themselves with the signs and symptoms of this deadly disease and practice proper hygiene to prevent it from spreading. Families are advised that if there is any signs meningococcal disease, they need to immediately go to a health facility to be assessed and all the divisional and subdivisional hospitals, health facilities have antibiotics as the first line of treatment for meningococcal.

The Ministry continues to work closely with UNICEF and WHO to rollout the National Men-C Immunisation Programme that aims to immunise all children and teenagers in Fiji aged between 1 to 19 years of age. The Men.C Vaccine is free of cost, it's safe and effective and is being delivered at schools, kindergartens, health centres and nursing stations across Fiji. The program began in the Central Division and Ra Subdivision on 14th May and will continue until Friday 29th June 2018.

Currently, the shipment of next batch of the vaccine doses are in progress and the Ministry is working towards rolling the Men.C Immunisation Program in the other divisions as well. Public will be advised accordingly of the dates once all the logistics has been confirmed.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry is advising people that Men.C vaccine will provide protection for up to 5

years and prevention is still the best way to stop this disease from spreading.

### How to prevent the spread of diseases such as meningococcal disease:

Fijians are encouraged to practise proper hygiene by:

- Covering their mouth and nose with a tissue or handkerchief when coughing and sneezing
- Disposing of used tissues in the bin or washing your handkerchiefs daily with soap and water
- After coughing or sneezing, wash your hands with soap and water
- Don't share eating utensils, cups/ glasses/ water bottles, drinks at social gathering (taki), cigarettes or kava bowls.

### Further information about meningococcal disease:

Symptoms of meningococcal disease, especially for older children and adults include:

- Sudden fever
- Vomiting
- Headache
- Stiff neck/backache

Other symptoms include nausea, eyes are sensitive to light, confusion, and in the final stages of the disease, a red/purple rash on the skin. In babies and small children, parents and carers should stay alert for the following symptoms:

- High fever
- Unusual crying
- Refusing to eat or drink
- Vomiting
- Floppy/drowsiness
- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Seizures or fits

In the final stages of the disease, a red/purple rash on the skin.

For further information about the disease, visit the Ministry's website: [http://www.health.gov.fj/?page\\_id=6575](http://www.health.gov.fj/?page_id=6575) for information on Immunisation roll out program visit [http://www.health.gov.fj/?page\\_id=6884](http://www.health.gov.fj/?page_id=6884)

## NEW INCINERATORS FOR HEALTH FACILITIES

**H**ealth facilities will have new incinerators to replace the old ones as part of the Ministry's initiative to equip the health stations with the necessary resources to assist the health staff in the proper management of wastes.

Assistant Health Minister Hon Alex O'Connor confirmed this while recently visiting the health facilities in the Northern Division.

"It was established through the routine health facility visits that the old incinerators were out of date and there was a need to replace them, therefore we are working on replacing them with new ones.", Hon. O'Connor said.

Four health facilities have been replaced with the new incinerators while others are in the pipeline.

Hon O'Connor reminded the health staff to make good use of the incinerators and take extreme care of the equipment at all times to ensure its maintenance and sustainability.

"Proper handling of the equipments is vital to reap the maximum output and I hope that this will be your priority", he added.

Meanwhile the delivery of new ambulances and the official vehicles are expected to be completed by this month to the all medical subdivisions to ease the transportation issues.

It is envisaged that all health facilities should be well equipped with the necessary resources particularly the availability of transport to reach out to patients for immediate medical intervention.



(Pictured on the left) Assistant Health Minister Hon Alex O'Connor inspects the new incinerator at the Nabouwalu hospital.



(Pictured at the centre) Minister for Health and Medical Services Hon. Rosy Akbar with the nurses and medical staff in Tavua during the outreach awareness conducted at Tavua market last week

## WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY NATIONAL CELEBRATIONS REACHES NORTH

**T**he Annual World Blood Donor Day 2018 was celebrated in the North with people turning out in huge numbers to mark the auspicious occasion and spread the gospel of the importance of blood donation.

A pool of activities flowed throughout the day with participation from school children, faith based organisation, various governmental and non-governmental organisation which carried the theme "Be there for someone else. Give blood. Share life". The Assistant Minister for health and medical services Hon Alex O'Connor while officiating at the function reminded the people on the importance of donating blood and its impact on peoples' lives.

"We often hear about calls for people to donate blood after major disasters or catastrophes – and that is obviously important – but we also need to recognise that donated blood is needed every day

in our major hospitals as our doctors and nurses go about their routine work of caring for unwell and injured patients. That's why we need people to know about the importance of voluntary blood donation on a consistent basis.

He further encouraged everyone to be advocates of blood donation and help spread the message on the importance of blood donation.

An awards night followed the national day events where the blood donors were recognised for their invaluable gift of life.

Mr O'Connor extended the Ministry's appreciation to all people who responded to the call for the unremunerated blood donation appeal and also urged them to encourage others to donate blood so that there is sufficient blood supply to assist patients in need.



(Pictured in the middle) Assistant Health Minister Hon. Alex O'Connor with other stakeholders at Nabouwalu for the World blood day celebrations.

## HEALTH FACILITIES TO BE FULLY RESOURCED

**A**dequate resources and improved health facilities remains the key priority for the Ministry of Health and Medical Services.

This was emphasised by the Assistant Health Minister Hon Alex O'Connor as he visited the remote facilities in the Naitasiri province to discuss the immediate necessities at the nursing stations.

It has been established through these visits, that the remote health facilities needs much attention which was not facilitated previously and the Ministry is

working diligently in attending to the needs of the rural based health facilities.

Hon O'Connor carefully analysed the immediate needs brought to his attention by the health staff. Some of which included water issues, staff quarters, medicine, stock communication and transportation.

Hon O'Connor assured the health staff that issues will be prioritised and immediately attended to assist them in enhancing the delivery of health services.



(Pictured at the centre) Assistant Health Minister Hon Alex O'Connor while having discussions with the health staff at the Naqali Health Centre

