

Weekly Health updates

March 2018



NEW VEHICLE FOR BUKUYA HEALTH CENTRE



Hon Assistant Minister with SDMO Nadi and Health Staff at Bukuya health centre with the new vehicle in the back.

Bukuya Health Centre in the interior of Viti levu received a new vehicle to further strengthen the health services in the area as this will assist the health staff to reach the people easily. The new four wheel drive vehicle was delivered to the health centre while the Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services Hon. Alex O' Connor visited the facility last week. Honourable O'Connor while talking to the staff at the centre said that the Ministry constantly reviews the

need for resources at the health facilities and would act immediately to address them. "We will continuously assess the resources and the services at our health facilities and will work closely with all stakeholders to address them so that our services are not compromised" Mr O'Connor said. The delivery of the vehicle has brought much relief to the staff who will be able to travel to patients and communities to attend emergencies as well as creating awareness on health issues.

O'CONNOR VISITS REMOTE HEALTH FACILITIES



Assistant Health Minister Alex O'Connor at the Balevuto Health Centre.

Assistant Minister for health and medical services Hon. Alex O'Connor continued the visits to the health facilities to ascertain the need for improvements in order to enhance the provision of medical services. The visit included facilities in the Namosi and Nadi sub-division particularly the remote locations where the medical staff face a huge challenge as resources are limited. The Assistant Minister discussed at length with the staff on needs and requirements to assist them equip better on the service delivery to meet the increasing demand of the people.

Mr O'Connor while thanking the staff for their hard work, also reminded them on the need to maintain the standard of medical services. "We acknowledge your hard work and at the same time we must understand that the demand from the patients are always high and we must be prepared for the challenges that come our way", he said. It was also established that one of the common issues the staff faced was communication. Mr O'Connor has assured that the arrangements will be made with respective departments to address the issues immediately.

EQUIPPING COMMUNITIES WITH KNOWLEDGE IS VITAL



Assistant Minister for Health Hon. Alex O'Connor with WHO representative in the South Pacific and Director of Pacific Technical Support, Dr Corrine Capuano and health staff at the media workshop

"Each one of us have the capacity to improve the health outcomes of our communities."

While addressing the media during the Health Reporting for Improved Health Outcomes Collaborative Workshop today, Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services Hon. Alex O'Connor said health communications is more than just providing information about health issues.

"It plays a far greater role in ensuring that communities are equipped with the knowledge and information about health issues to take action to improve and protect, take responsibilities of their health," Hon. O'Connor said

Asst. Minister O'Connor reminded the media that they play a critical role in not only changing health behaviours but also transmitting information across during times of outbreaks or emergencies.

"These news report can mean life and death for our communities. This is something that we need to get it right," he said.

Accuracy and timeliness, Asst. Minister O'Connor said, were just as critical in order to provide practical and clear information to these communities in order for them to take precautionary measures.

While the media holds the power to ensure that the general public is provided with the latest, most accurate and timely information, he stressed the need for media to avoid causing confusion and misunderstanding about critical health related issues.

With the recent outbreak of meningococcal disease,

Asst. Minister O'Connor emphasized the need for media to make the public understand the sign and symptoms rather than causing alarm and anxiety as it is still an uncommon disease in Fiji.

He also touched on non-communicable diseases and the challenges faced in changing the mind-set and behaviours.

"Changing behaviour is possibly the hardest thing to do as it requires creating a change and this does not occur overnight."

Asst. Minister O'Connor added the workshop reflects on the strong partnership and commitment between the Fijian government and the media to work collaboratively, strengthen their knowledge and partnership to improve health reporting.

The workshop, which was organised in collaboration between the Ministry of Health and World Health Organisation, also heard from WHO representative in the South Pacific and Director of Pacific Technical Support, Dr Corrine Capuano.

She told the participants "you are champions for building community awareness of health issues, changing social norms, inciting emotions and getting people engaged so that they can change their health behaviours".

The Ministry's National Advisor for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) Dr. Isimeli Tukana and Acting National Advisor Communicable Diseases Dr. Aalisha Sahukhan also held interactive sessions with the media.

MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE INFORMATION SHEET

Meningococcal disease is a life-threatening disease caused by the bacteria *Neisseria Meningitides*. It can cause infections in the lining of the brain (meningitis) and in the blood (meningococemia), or both. These conditions are very serious and can be deadly.

Over recent years Fiji has seen an increase in cases of people getting meningococcal disease. This is why the Ministry of Health and Medical Services is taking immediate, nation-wide action.

Signs and symptoms of Meningococcal Disease

Symptoms of meningococcal disease, especially for older children and adults include sudden fever, vomiting, headache, and stiff neck/backache. Other symptoms include:

- Nausea
- Eyes are sensitive to light
- Confusion
- Rash – red/purple spots in the skin

It can be difficult to notice the symptoms in babies, or they may not be there at all. Some of the symptoms that you should be alert for are:

- High fever
- Unusual crying
- Refusing to eat or drink

- Vomiting
- Floppy/drowsy
- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Seizures or Fits
- Rash – red/purple spots on the skin

This is a deadly disease. If a person has the signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease, they require urgent medical treatment.

Prevention

- Practicing proper hygiene can help prevent the spread of the disease
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue or handkerchief when coughing and sneezing
- Dispose tissue in the bin, wash handkerchief 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.

For more information please visit your nearest health facility or the 'My Health Section' on the Ministry of Health and Medical Services website <http://www.health.gov.fj>



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