

STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF HEALTH

HON. RUDYARD SPENCER

AT

MONTHLY PRESS BRIEFING

January 21, 2010

Ladies and gentlemen of the press good afternoon

I would like to welcome you to the second of the Ministry's monthly press briefings.

Today, we would like to focus on the following areas:

1. The establishment of the Ophthalmology Centre under the Jamaica/Cuba eye care agreement
2. The Ministry's support to Haiti
3. Update on the Blood Bank
4. Outcome of the second of regular meetings with the Opposition Spokesman on Health

Establishment of the Ophthalmology Centre

The Ophthalmology centre that has been established as part of the Jamaica/Cuba Eye care agreement is scheduled to be officially launched on Wednesday, January 27, 2010 at 2:00pm on the lawns of the St. Joseph's Hospital. The centre, which is located at the St. Joseph's Hospital, will accommodate Jamaicans who are in need of eye care services. It will be at no cost and will also serve CARICOM countries.

The Centre will be able to take up to five thousand Jamaicans per year. Previously, we were only able to transport about a thousand persons per year to seek treatment in Cuba.

These persons will be able to obtain post operative care at the National Chest Hospital. We recently officially opened the new 22 bed ward and the residences that will accommodate the Cuban Health Professionals who will be working at the Centre.

NEED DETAILED TECHNICAL REPORT

Ministry of Health's support to Haiti (NEED LATEST UPDATE)

I would like to start by expressing my sincere regret to the people of Haiti for what they are going through. This is truly a tragedy of immense proportions and we are committed to helping as much as possible. I would also like to thank our health volunteers for the tremendous work they have been doing since their arrival in Haiti on Saturday, January 16, 2010. The twenty (20) member team includes 7 doctors – 2 orthopaedic surgeons, 3 general surgeons, 1 anaesthetist, 1 Public Health doctor, 5 nurses, 5 Emergency Medical Technicians, 1 Orthopaedic Technician, 1 Public Health Inspector and 1 Health Educator. We have since increased the number to 25 to include 3 orthopaedic surgeons and one (2) anaesthetists.

The team immediately started seeing patients on their arrival. The team's activities as at yesterday are as follows:

- re-establish an Operating Theatre at a Polyclinic in the capital Port-au-Prince.
- 141 new patients were seen
- 50 patients were reviewed at follow-up visits
- 48 operations – 28 major and 20 minor
- 35 persons were immunized
- 6 patients were delivered, including three premature babies

A number of other life saving procedures were also conducted by the team. The current team is expected to stay in the country for seven days after arrival and from then we will be rotating other teams of health and medical professionals. I have to applaud the team for responding to the needs of our Haitian brothers and sisters so quickly and for giving of themselves so freely for this cause. We appreciate all your efforts.

The Ministry of Health is the central coordinating agency for medical and health volunteers to Haiti. Persons in the medical and health care fields who wish to volunteer may contact the Ministry of Health at 1-888-ONE LOVE (1-888-663-5683), seven days per week from 8:30am to 5:00pm.

Update on the Blood Bank

(Possible areas of focus from recommendations)

NPHL & Blood Bank

- Inventory Mgmt system to be implemented/activated
- Procurement function centralized
- Standard operating procedures being developed
- Review of existing equipment with a view to updating where applicable
- Redeployment of staff to fill critical gaps

Update on meeting with Opposition Spokesman on Health

Last Thursday, I met with the Opposition Spokesman on Health, Dr. Fenton Ferguson in the second of our quarterly meetings. I updated Dr. Ferguson on the activities of the Ministry and on issues including the ongoing transformation programme of the Ministry, human resource plans for the health sector, training of workers, and an update on plans to source cheaper pharmaceuticals, which will result in savings of approximately \$460 Million on a total of 160 items.

The Opposition Spokesman agreed with the work that we have done so far in an effort to increase cost efficiency and improve health care delivery in this difficult financial climate. He also agreed with the decisions to re-centralise the Human Resource, Auditing and Project functions of the Regional Health Authorities.

The next meeting with Dr. Ferguson is scheduled for April.

Thank you.