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ANY REPLY OR SUBSEQUENT REFERENCE
SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO THE PERMANENT
SECRETARY AND THE FOLLOWING REFERENCE
QUOTED:

REF NO:

September 9, 2019

Dear Physician,

Jamaica declared a Dengue outbreak in January 2019. Since the beginning of January, the number of cases fell monthly until June when the number of cases started to rise again. This is in keeping with our annual trend where the number of cases starts to increase in June and peaks in November. This year, however, we are seeing more cases than last year.

Between January 2018 and September 2, 2019, there were 39 Dengue related deaths. A Review Panel comprising of physicians from several hospitals have been reviewing the cases. The panel has noted the following:

- Signs and symptoms suggestive of gastrointestinal and respiratory illnesses were common.
- Most cases were under 14 years of age.
- Persons with Asthma and Sickle Cell disease were at high risk.
- The use of non steroidal anti inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) was found in several cases.
- Most persons presented late to hospital.
- Most deaths were within 24 hours of presentation to hospital.

Coming out of this review I am asking that doctors pay close attention to the following:

- The presenting signs and symptoms of Dengue Fever are varied and health care workers must think about Dengue where acute viral illnesses are suspected and advise patients accordingly.
- The updated clinical guidelines have been sent to all Senior Medical Officers, Medical Officers of Health, Medical Associations for distribution.
- Patient education is needed especially with regards to the medications to avoid in febrile illnesses at this time.
- Early recognition of warning signs and early interventions is needed to improve outcomes.
- A low threshold for close monitoring of persons with chronic illnesses is needed.
- Close patient monitoring in hospital, under supervision of senior staff, during the critical phase of the illness especially during rehydration is critical for improved outcomes.

Despite the trend suggesting that there will be a significant increase in the number of cases, with increased public education, early interventions and appropriate management, we can decrease the likelihood of poor outcomes.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Jacqueline Bisasor McKenzie
Chief Medical Officer