

# HEALTH HERALD

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**WELLNESS EXPRESS BRINGS MENTAL HEALTH  
SUPPORT CLOSER TO JAMAICA'S YOUTH**

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# Research Driving Better Health Outcomes

The Ministry of Health & Wellness recently concluded its 16th National Health Research Conference, a three-day event that brought together researchers, healthcare professionals, academics and policymakers to examine key issues shaping Jamaica's health sector.

Held under the theme "Health for All in a Changing Environment," the conference highlighted the growing importance of research in strengthening health planning, policy development and service delivery. Participants shared findings and explored innovative approaches to some of Jamaica's most pressing health challenges.

Presentations covered a wide range of priority areas, including Non-Communicable Diseases, demographic shifts, men's health, sexual and reproductive health, workplace wellness, as well as the emerging role of artificial intelligence and robotics in healthcare.

Minister of Health & Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, CD, MP, underscored the value of research in building a stronger health system, noting its importance to health security.



"Health research is essential to building a resilient and responsive health system. The quality of work presented at this year's conference demonstrates the depth of talent and commitment within our research community," the Minister said.

The conference concluded with an awards ceremony recognising outstanding research contributions. **Dr. Marcia Johnson** received the award for **Most Impactful Oral Presentation**, while **Mr. Devon Keith** captured **Best Overall Oral Presentation**. **Dr. Adrienne Williams** was awarded **Best Overall Poster Presentation**, and **Dr. Amanda Pringle** received both **Best Student Poster Presentation** and **Most Impactful Poster Presentation**.

The Ministry also expressed appreciation to the National Epidemiology Branch, reviewers, conference organisers and partners whose efforts supported the successful staging of the event.

# Government of Jamaica and United Kingdom Rollout Wellness Express



The initiative aims to improve access to care by bringing services closer to young people who may otherwise face financial, social or geographic barriers to support.

“The Wellness Express is perfectly timed as part of the Ministry’s expanded youth mental health response,” said Minister of Health & Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton. “It complements initiatives such as the #DoYourShare campaign, the CARE Bus Initiative, and the U-Matter Chatline, by bringing structured mental health support directly into the spaces where children already exist.”

The multi-sectoral initiative brings together the Ministry of Health & Wellness; the Ministry of National Security and Peace; the Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information; and the National Parenting Support Commission.

Andrew Bowden, UK Development Representative for Jamaica and Caribbean Regional Counsellor, noted that the partnership promotes a public health approach to violence prevention through coordinated, whole-of-government action.

By strengthening early intervention and support services for children and adolescents, the Wellness Express represents an important step toward building safer, healthier and more resilient communities across Jamaica.

The Government of Jamaica, in partnership with the Government of the United Kingdom and several key Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), has officially launched the Wellness Express, a mobile initiative designed to deliver adolescent mental health services across the country.

Launched on Friday, February 13 at Haile Selassie School, the Wellness Express forms part of the Violence Prevention Partnership Programme (VPPP), a collaborative effort between the Government of Jamaica and the Government of the United Kingdom to address the root causes of youth violence through evidence-based, public health interventions.

The mobile service will provide structured mental health and psychosocial support directly within and around schools and communities, particularly those located in Zones of Special Operations (ZOSO).



# Percy Junor Hospital Achieves Baby-Friendly Accreditation



Percy Junor Hospital in Spaulding, Manchester, has been officially accredited under the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), bringing the total number of Baby-Friendly designated public hospitals in Jamaica to 12.

The BFHI, led globally by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, recognises health facilities that provide optimal care for mothers and newborns while actively promoting and supporting breastfeeding. The initiative encourages early initiation of breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and continued breastfeeding alongside complementary foods for up to two years or beyond.

Minister of Health & Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, congratulated the management and staff of Percy Junor Hospital for their commitment to improving maternal and infant care.

“This accreditation reflects the hard work of healthcare professionals at this facility who understand that giving our children the best start in life begins from the earliest moments after birth,” the Minister said.

Achieving Baby-Friendly status requires hospitals to meet rigorous standards, including implementing evidence-based clinical practices, providing breastfeeding counselling and education, and maintaining policies that protect and promote breastfeeding.

Regional Director of the Southern Regional Health Authority, Michael Bent, also commended the Percy Junor Hospital team, noting that the designation reflects sustained staff training and a strong commitment to quality, patient-centred care.

With this latest accreditation, Percy Junor Hospital joins other Baby-Friendly facilities across the island as the Ministry of Health & Wellness continues to expand the programme, ensuring mothers and newborns have access to consistent, high-quality support and care.



# Reggae, Research and Relevance:

## How the Ministry's Library Turned Reggae into a Wellness Experience

At first glance, a library might seem like the quietest place in the Ministry of Health & Wellness. But in February, the Ministry's health library pulsed with reggae rhythms, laughter and conversation as staff gathered to celebrate Reggae Month and Jamaica Day in a way few expected.

The celebration, organised by the Documentation Information and Access Services (DIAS) Branch, transformed the library into a vibrant cultural space, complete with reggae music, traditional Jamaican treats and lively staff participation. Behind the music and festivities was a deeper purpose: reminding staff that the Ministry's library is not just a place for books, but a gateway to knowledge, connection and support.

"People know reggae exists, but sometimes it sits at the back of their minds," rs. Vinnese Dias, Director of DIAS, explained. "We wanted to remind everyone that reggae was born here. It belongs to Jamaica...and it's part of who we are."

The DIAS Branch serves as the Ministry's information hub, responsible for storing and managing key documents such as manuals, guidelines and policy materials.

More importantly, the team helps staff access reliable research and specialised information when they need it most. The branch also wanted to bring that work to life. The idea for the event began months earlier. Last October, the team had planned a Heritage Week initiative to showcase the library and its services, but the plans were disrupted by Hurricane Melissa. When February arrived, with Reggae Month and Jamaica Day on Friday, February 27, 2026, the team revived the concept.

"If we were going to do it," Mrs. Dias, Director recalled, "we had to look at it through a health and wellness lens. We are a health library, so whatever we do must align with the Ministry's vision and mission."

The result was a collaborative effort led by an energetic team of information professionals.

"They're very creative staff," Mrs. Dias said proudly. "I saw them build guitars from scratch. They did the research, we discussed the history of reggae, and together we decided which artistes to highlight."



Those conversations bridged generations. Younger staff members explored the music through research, while senior team members helped fill in the cultural context, discussing legendary figures such as Jimmy Cliff and ensuring the display reflected reggae's rich history across different eras and voices.

The library itself was transformed for the occasion. Staff were welcomed by reggae music and displays celebrating Jamaican culture. Antique household items such as coal pots and traditional irons were showcased alongside local treats like tamarind balls, jackass corn, coconut drops and potato pudding.

Staff also embraced the theme, dressing in reggae colours and traditional Jamaican attire.

The event drew an overwhelming response. More than 80 participants were recorded, with many others stopping by throughout the day.

"We were pleasantly surprised by the response," Mrs. Dias, said. "People were coming in even when the space was full."

The programme also featured interactive moments, including karaoke-style performances where staff volunteered to sing reggae classics. The celebration took on an additional dimension with a segment on reggae and mental health delivered by Miss Health & Wellness, Ms. Nikisha Harris who explored how music can support emotional well-being.



For the DIAS team, the celebration was more than a cultural event, it was also a reminder of the important role the library plays in supporting the work of the Ministry.

Behind the music, displays and food is a team of trained information professionals dedicated to helping staff find the knowledge they need. From locating research to accessing specialised databases or connecting with libraries across Jamaica, the branch works quietly to ensure information is within reach.

"The internet gives you a lot of information," Mrs. Dias noted, "but we help you narrow it down."

Through its professional networks, the library can often source materials beyond the Ministry's own collection. As Mrs. Dias simply put it, "What we don't have, we can find for you."

While reggae brought staff together in celebration, the event also served as a reminder that the DIAS Branch remains a valuable resource —ready to connect staff with the information they need to learn, research and make informed decisions.





MINISTRY OF  
**HEALTH &  
WELLNESS**

# IT'S AWARDS SEASON

Do You Know a Team Member Who Should  
Be Recognised?



**GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S  
ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS (GGAA)  
&  
THE ETERNAL FATHER AWARDS**




Team Members are invited to  
recommend individuals for nomination!

## **SEND YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS BY:**

- GGAA- Tuesday, March 17, 2026
- The EFA- Tuesday, March 24, 2026

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

 [ABIGAIL-JOANNA.EDWARDS@MOH.GOV.JM](mailto:ABIGAIL-JOANNA.EDWARDS@MOH.GOV.JM)

 876-510-0364

# Staff Spotlight

**Chad Morgan**

**#PeopleInHealth**

**NAME:** Chad M. Morgan

**JOB TITLE/POSITION:** Senior Health Promotion and Education Officer

**DIVISION/DEPARTMENT/UNIT:** Health Promotion and Protection Branch/ Health Promotion and Education Unit

**WHAT IS YOUR CORE FUNCTION:** Workplace Wellness Focal Point along with planning, developing, implementing and evaluating health promotion and education programmes and strategies and facilitate the development of policies nationally

**MY VISION FOR THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH & WELLNESS IS:** To be an evidence driven Ministry utilising data across all departments, regions and programme areas for every decision and programme

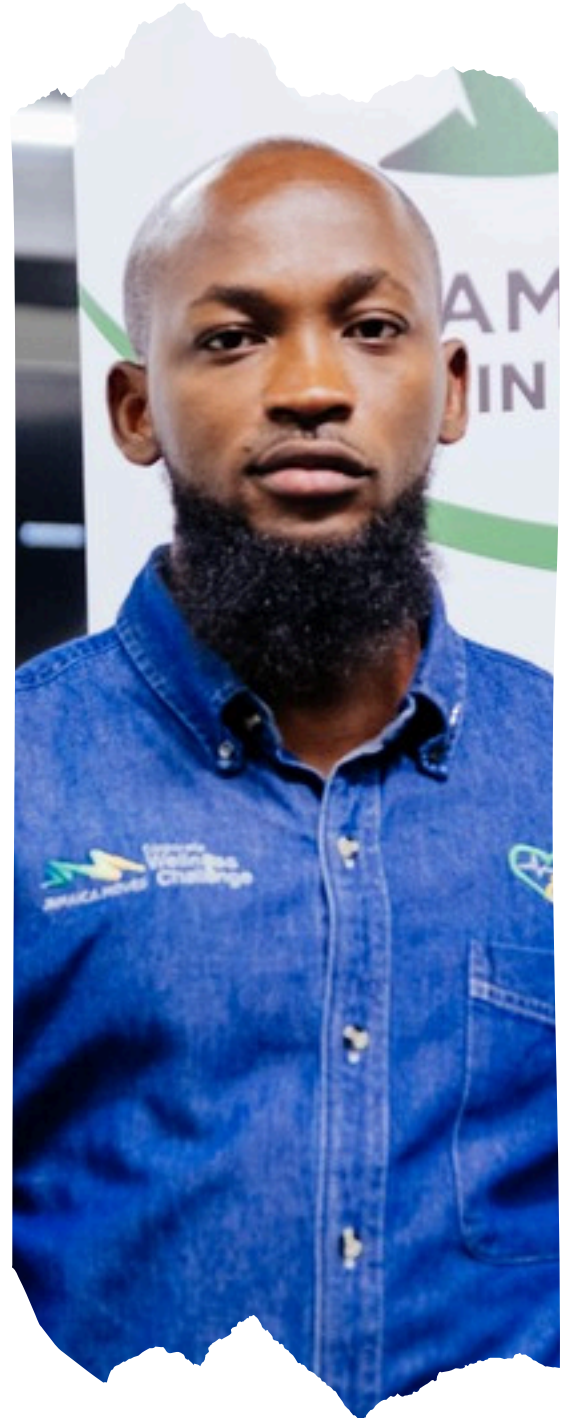
**WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT YOUR JOB:** Developing interventions and health promotion strategies that are evident at the grassroots level

**WHICH HIGH SCHOOL DID YOU ATTEND:** Gaynstead High School

**FAVOURITE CHILDHOOD MEMORY:** Road Trips in the back of late dad's truck

**FAVOURITE COLOUR:** Dark shades of orange

**WHAT WOULD BE YOUR DREAM VACATION:** Spending two weeks in an Executive Lagoon Suite at the Hotel Danieli, in Venice during the Venice Film Festival



## CREDITS:

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