Fighting Together to Reduce Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases

At the United Nations High Level Meeting on NCDs held on September 19 and 20, 2010, it was submitted that total global deaths from non-communicable diseases will rise from 36 million in 2008 to 52 million in 2030 if appropriate action is not taken globally. All sectors of society – civil, private and governmental - were challenged to enter into collaborative partnership to effect change and reduce the incidence of these diseases.

The Caribbean is the region of the Americas most affected by chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer and chronic lung diseases which kill 3 in 5 people in Barbados and cause great socio-economic harm throughout the world by increasing individual and household impoverishment. This threat is exacerbated in developing nations where economies are less stable.

The UN Meeting concluded that one of the responsibilities of the civil sector was to rally political and community awareness in support of the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. This gauntlet was taken up by the Healthy Caribbean Coalition. Founded in 2008, the group has been sensitising persons throughout the Caribbean about NCDs and methods to reduce their incidence.

The Coalition conducted an advocacy and educational campaign using mobile phones and social and traditional media, entitled Get The Message, which encouraged persons to indicate that they “Got The Message” on the dangers of NCDs and understood ways to combat the diseases. A half-million responses were received throughout the Caribbean, making it one of the most successful health-directed campaigns utilising non-traditional media.

From this, the Coalition has been encouraged to expand their presence in social media to further educate, build awareness and become a comprehensive health portal for the Caribbean. However, it required funding to accomplish its objectives, and approached a pharmacy with a proven track record in the pursuit of Health and Wellness to receive necessary financial support.

As one of the oldest pharmacies in Barbados, Knights Pharmacy, realises that to affect change in the scourge of these diseases a combined societal effort is required. In 2010, the organization formed the Knights Health Advantage Club to assist persons suffering from NCDs in the control of their disease and to act as a preventative measure for those persons currently in good health. Offering testing for blood glucose, cholesterol and blood pressure as well as counselling, information and discounts, the Club seeks to work along with medical practitioners to help patients to better understand and regulate their condition.

“This partnership is ideal,” said Andrew Bourne, Knights Pharmacy Pharmaceutical Manager, “as both the Knights Health Advantage Club and the Healthy Caribbean Coalition are committed to the control and reduction of these diseases in Barbados and beyond.” Professor Trevor Hassell, Chairman of the Healthy Caribbean Coalition, in accepting the donation, commented that he was pleased that, “Knights Pharmacy had, through this donation and other recent initiatives, shown commitment to contribute to the whole of society approach to tackling the NCDs as recommended at the UN High Level Summit on chronic diseases.”