



HealthMATTERS



Message from the CHAIR

Dear Readers,

As we are going through 2022, I would like to thank you all for your continuous support towards the Health Professionals Council. Our success is defined by your hard work and we dedicate our growth to you.

2021 was rather a smooth sailing year for the Health Professionals Council. We had the opportunity to host a few CPD activities for our registrants amidst the pandemic that we are still facing. We welcomed a new administrative officer and bid farewell to our old colleague, Loic. From new beginnings to new projects, mishaps and detours, we made it through!

The year 2022 has a crucial impact on new objectives, goals, and accomplishments. We look forward to more success stories similar to that achieved in 2021 through continuous collaborations and support.

HPC Chairperson
Mrs. Corinne Ryan

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The Seychelles has ratified all of the nine (9) core UN Human Rights treaties. International human rights law guarantees everyone the right to the highest attainable standard of health and obligates governments to take steps to prevent threats to public health and to provide medical care to those who need it. The Covid-19 Pandemic has created an extraordinary and unprecedented situation for the human rights landscape, both nationally and internationally.



Human Rights during the COVID-19 Pandemic

BY MICHELLE MARGUERITE

Proactive measures to respect and adhere to human rights obligations during these times of a pandemic are paramount. Even where rights have remained in place, there have been obstacles to exercising some rights fully. In States' response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, around the world public policies have been adopted that limit individual freedoms in order to control disease transmissions. Whilst these limitations or liberties have been proven important for pandemic control, they may have had costs to groups already within the vulnerable category who are already susceptible to human rights violation. For example, with strict restrictions put in place people with disabilities and the elderly were not fully included and/or considered as part of the COVID responses. There are already many signs that the pandemic may have exacerbated existing inequality and have created greater gaps in health and education access, and increased poverty.

A human rights approach should be at the core of public health and all other decisions during this time. This means an approach focused on the most vulnerable in society. Careful attention to human rights principles such as non-discrimination transparency and respect for human dignity can foster an effective response amidst the turmoil and disruption that inevitably results in times of crisis. Such approach would ensure a more equitable, realistic and sustainable pandemic response.



EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIANS

BY BEGGUITA ARISOL



Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), more commonly known as Paramedics, respond to emergencies on different sites or scenes. For example, in a home where someone may be having a heart attack or to the site of a multi-vehicle accidents.

EMTs most frequently work in ambulances but may provide care for patients who are being transported by air or by sea and even help transfer sick and injured patients from other islands to Mahé by boat, plane, and helicopter. This form of medical evacuation is often referred to as Medevac.

With the opening of Seychelles International Airport, and the rise in the flow of tourism in the country, the EMT team has seen a rise in near drowning cases and cases of recorded drowning amongst tourists. Sadly some cases have even resulted in a few deaths. Road traffic or vehicular accident, also has been rising constantly especially amongst our young people this year.

With the rise in Covid 19 cases, especially around festive seasons, the EMT services and ambulance team have seen a massive rise in both emergency calls and routine calls. Recently, most of the specialized clinics have opened their doors to the public, thus further increasing the amounts of routine calls, from scheduled appointments to wound dressings and stretching our services to its limits. The EMT service is under stress due to this recent upsurge and influx of patients.



For the upcoming Labour Day, we would advise the public to take extra precautions on the road especially during the evenings. We strongly advocate for the no drinking while driving rule, avoid using mobile phone while driving, and be very aware of your surroundings even of the passengers in your vehicle.

Moreover, be careful whenever you are on the beach. Do not go swimming by yourself and/or under the influence of substances that may dampen or slow down your reaction. Above all, be mindful and cautious of children, our elderly and other patrons within the same area as you.



“EAT FOR OUR HEALTH” CAMPAIGN

In commemoration of World Food Day on 16th October 2021, the Nutrition Unit launched its “Eat For Our Health” campaign to encourage people to start being more mindful of what they are eating.

LAUNCHING THE CAMPAIGN

The launch was done in collaboration with an activity organised by Nutrition technician students from NIHSS on Friday 15th October, whereby they donated local fruits, vegetables and tubers to the residents of NEP elderly home.



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

The campaign itself stems from the recently launched Food-based dietary guidelines and will continue throughout 2022. There are several core messages being highlighted this year as follows.

1. Eat a variety of different coloured fruits and vegetables
2. Eat fresh and local
3. Reduce sugar and salt
4. Drink plenty of water
5. Choose home-made meals
6. Sit less and move more



MY HEALTHY PLATE

To encourage people to eat more mindfully and also to know what types and amount of foods to include at each meal we designed a plate with the support of Ms. Stelina Marie from the Health Promotion Unit.

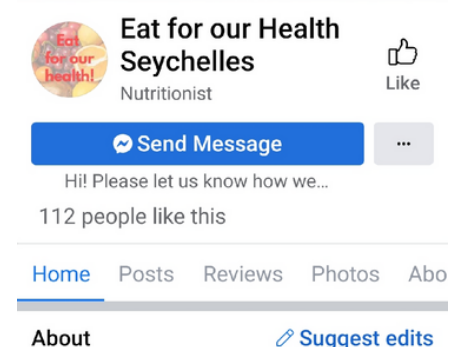
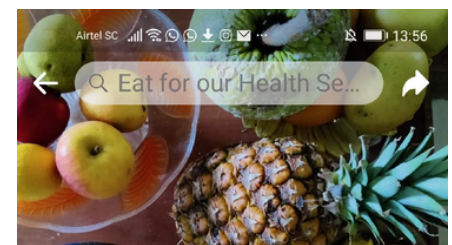
The plate places emphasis on plant-based foods with moderate amounts of healthy animal products.

1/2 of your plate should be vegetables and/ or fruits; 1/4 of your plate local starches e.g. sweet potato/ breadfruit; and the final 1/4 should be a protein source e.g. fish, eggs, chicken or beans.

ENGAGING VIA THE MEDIA

To keep people engaged we have been publishing weekly articles in the Nation newspaper, and articles in Today's 'Ozordi Dimans' every two weeks.

We also recently launched our Facebook page 'Eat for our Health Seychelles' and Instagram page 'eat4ourhealth' and would encourage everyone to go and check it out for some nutrition tips and guidance.



TWO RECIPES TO TRY THIS LABOUR DAY!

Mouhamara (Red Capsicum - Walnut dip)



Ingredients

2 red capsicum
3/4 cup walnut halves
1/2 cup fresh whole wheat bread crumbs
1 1/2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar + 1
teaspoon honey
1/2 teaspoon coarse salt
1/2 small red chili
1/2 teaspoon ground roasted cumin
1/2 teaspoon paprika
1/2 teaspoon coarse black pepper
1 tablespoon Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1 tablespoon fresh lemon or lime juice

Method

1. Halve two red bell peppers, rub in olive oil and herbs, and roast under a grill at 400c until well grilled and soft. (Scrape off some burnt parts, but leave some for a slight smoky taste).
2. Put all of the ingredients into the bowl of a food processor fitted with a metal blade.
3. Pulse until nicely blended, but not completely pureed, stopping to scrape down the sides as needed.
4. Place in small bowl and sprinkle some chopped Walnuts on top.
5. Use the Mouhamara to dip strips of vegetables such as carrots, celery, zucchini, green capsicum or even fingers of brown toast.

Mango and passion fruit fool



Ingredients

2 large ripe mangoes
4 passion fruits, halved
2 x 150g/ 5oz tubs plain yogurt (use low-fat if you prefer)
Juice of 1 lime

Method

1. Peel the mangoes using a vegetable peeler. Slice the cheeks off one and cut into small dice. Set aside.
2. Cut the flesh from the remaining mango and stone, then purée flesh in a blender.
3. Squeeze out the seeds from 2 of the passion fruit halves and mix with the mango purée. Add lime juice to taste.
4. Gently fold the yogurt and half the diced mango through the fruity purée.
5. Divide between 4 glasses and top with the remaining diced mango.
6. Cover and chill for 30 mins before eating.
7. Scoop the seeds from the remaining passion fruit over the top of the fools to serve.

**Coming
Soon!**

1st
JUNE 2022



***Did you
know?***



LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

**for International
Applicants**

**Checkout HPC website
for further
information!!**

News!



**THAT
DID
NOT
GET IN**

Let's TALK: HIV/AIDS



The National AIDS Programme coordinate the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the national Health Sector Response to the HIV and AIDS pandemic in the country.

In a recent interview with Mrs. Sabrina Mousbe, the Programs Manager of the National AIDS Control Programme of the Ministry of Health, we got to know the current HIV/AIDS situation in the country amidst the COVID pandemic and we learn more about the role of the AIDS Control Programme. Mrs. Mousbe has been working in the field of HIV/AIDS since 2008 and is based at the Blue Roof Building located within the compound of the Seychelles Hospital.

Tell us more about the aim, roles and responsibilities of the National AIDS Control Programme?

The National AIDS Control Programme exists to coordinate the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the national health sector response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic in the country.

The health sector response includes:

- Promoting behaviour change, reducing stigma, mobilizing communities and addressing other social determinants.
- Delivery of HIV services such as antiretroviral therapy, services to prevent the transmission of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, HIV testing, harm reduction amongst others.
- Formulation of SOPs and guidelines
- HIV education
- Building the capacity of services providers
- Ensuring safety of blood and blood products for transfusion
- HIV surveillance, research and evaluation
- Management of health commodities
- Forming and maintaining health sector coordination mechanism such as the Technical Advisory Committee.

What are the aims of the Programme?

- Preventing new HIV infections
- Improving the health and wellbeing of people living with HIV
- Preventing death from AIDS
- Achieving a well-coordinated health sector response
- Controlling HIV epidemic
- Contributing towards the achievement of SDG and National targets

Why Implement a National AIDS Control Programme?

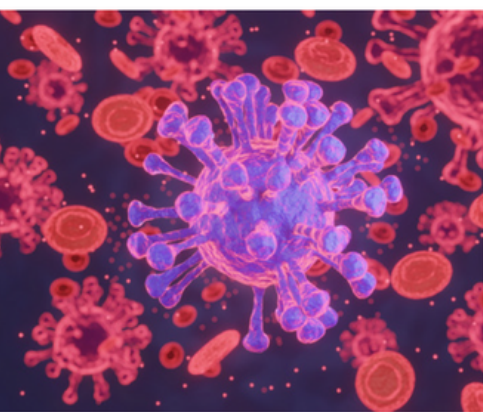
- The expansion of the HIV epidemic in recent years.
- HIV/AIDS have major social and economic impacts on individuals, families, communities and countries.
- AIDS arising from untreated or poorly treated HIV infection is associated with high mortality.
- HIV infection and AIDS death are preventable with the appropriate interventions.
- A strong HIV programme in the health sector contributes to a strong national AIDS response.

How many staff do you have under the National AIDS Control Programme?

"Despite having a well-established and functioning structure, the National AIDS Control Programme is under staffed, with only the Programme Manager running the day to day function of the unit. However, the unit collaborates with other technical health experts and non-health agencies that strengthen the efforts for the unit to deliver on its mandate."

HIV / AIDS





Is HIV / AIDS a concern in the Seychelles?

Mrs. Mousbe explained that at the beginning of the epidemic, the HIV health sector response brought together health professionals and key affected communities to collaborate with the hope of ending AIDS in Seychelles. But 34 years later, it is unfortunate that this still remains an aspiration for the country. Mrs. Mousbe highlighted that Seychelles has been progressive in its response to the epidemic over the years but evidently controlling it remains the biggest challenge. She pointed out that existing structural inequalities remain the most persistent challenge in the country given that such inequalities remind us of cumulative effect of the cultural, social, economic, and political dimensions and how little it takes to destabilize the HIV response. She added that the evidence on the growing structural inequalities also shows us precisely how they themselves present as a threat to the public health of the country, especially during this COVID-19 era with the number of new HIV cases and AIDS related death still on the rise.

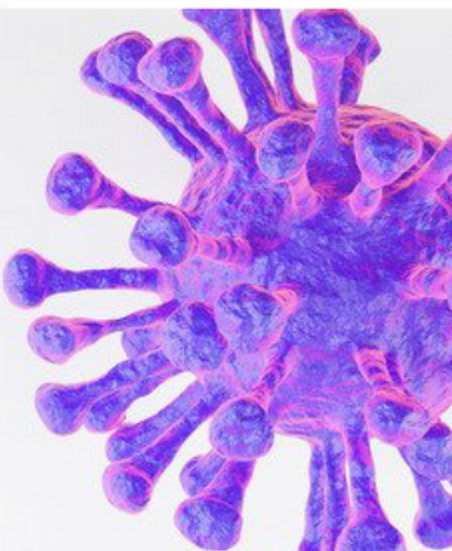
The number of new HIV cases and AIDS related death are still on the rise.

What is one of the greatest achievement of the National AIDS Control Programme to date?

"In my view, the greatest achievement so far is the establishment of the HIV/AIDS Prevention Task Force (HAPTF) in 2019. The HAPTF comprises of representatives from both the health and non-health HIV programmes and key partners who are often left out of conversations about HIV prevention and care when it comes to discussing about protecting their organizations, communities and the country from the virus."

"I wanted to ensure that there is a structure under my leadership that is meaningfully represented in order to achieve its main responsibilities, being advocacy and prevention that in turn would strengthen the health sector response."

Mrs. Mousbe explained that the health sector response cannot fulfill its mission without engaging with and mobilizing non-health institutions, individuals, key affected communities and people living with HIV/AIDS because that is exactly why health sector response was established in the first place. Since its creation, HAPTF managed to make HIV/AIDS information, education and communication available across the different sectors and communities. She reiterated that an ideal health-sector response is one that demands robust synergy across all sectors of the society.



How have COVID impacted your work and your outreach activities geared towards your targeted population?

COVID has disrupted some of the prevention, treatment and care service delivery such as;

- (1) Some of outreach programmes could not be conducted (eg. visit of hot spots) due to restrictions in place.
- (2) The number of patients accessing CDCU per day had to be reduced. People were seen on an appointment basis. They were called in to attend clinics. This resulted in longer turnaround time for non-urgent referrals and access to specialized services.
- (3) People could not access the health facilities for their HIV tests. Hence, the attendances dropped by 50% from 2020 to 2021.
- (4) The amount of HIV treatment prescribed to patients had to be reduced to two weeks only as a precautionary measure. This was to ensure that all patients had treatment in case of any delay with procurement. However, this resulted in more frequent visits by patients in order to collect their prescriptions.
- (5) Access to and collection of condoms were reduced due the triage process in place. People were not keen to state or have their name documented for collecting condoms. Also, some areas that were very helpful with condom distribution programme were closed (e.g. bars, discotheques and hotels). Hence, condom distribution was severely impacted upon.

Mrs. Mousbe went on to note that despite these negative impacts, COVID-19 also presented the programme with new opportunities and new ways of doing things such as;

- (1) Rolling out HIV self-test programme
- (2) Further decentralization of services including Civil Society Organizations (CSO) involvement
- (3) Reviewing the current National Strategy to include contingency plan ensuring continuity of care in line with the national and global targets and commitments
- (4) Intensifying the involvement of the various media platforms to continuously educate and update the population with relevant accurate information.
- (5) Introduction of new patients into the national HIV care programme especially those who were previously seeking treatment overseas or from private clinics/pharmacies
- (6) Mobilizing new suppliers for medication, consumables and commodities
- (7) Reaching out to patients by using social media platforms for their ongoing one-to-one interventions.
- (8) Task shifting, which has allowed staff to develop new skills
- (9) HIV screening for clients with flu like symptoms who tested Negative for COVID19.

What are you concerned as COVID gradually fades out or prolonged its stay?

"I think, as far as HIV is concerned, in either cases that is, whether COVID gradually fades or prolongs its stay, our role as health sector response is to ensure a client-centred approach as people navigate the continuum of HIV care. The same way we invest in getting people to wear masks correctly we should equally invest in ensuring the availability of condoms and its correct use. As health service providers we need to have an in-depth understanding to ensure that access is not hindered and compromised. It is equally important to listen and hear from people who are COVID-19 and HIV positive so that we can continue to embrace the necessary prevention and care efforts as best we can.

At the same time, I am deeply concerned about organizations contributing to the HIV response in the country not having enough resources to sustain the support response. This is mainly due to the decrease and diversion of donors' commitment and willingness. Despite their good intentions, with this approach their capacity cannot match the needs for both diseases.

Another concern is the use of social or the traditional media as a replacement to being physically present in an outreach or face to face contact session to educate the population. Can we, to date, guarantee how much people actually understand the information being disseminated? This approach should not be a standalone if we want to easily gauge their knowledge and understanding of the content shared and on their specific needs.

These are my main concerns for the future of the health sector response to HIV in the country, especially if COVID pandemic continues to be present and remain the health system priority focus. In many ways these challenges will be barriers to the programme and will end up with a double epidemic, burdening the country."

Do you think there is enough being done with regards to educating our health professionals internally so they know?

"Unfortunately, it's not enough! I have to be honest! Obviously, for several reasons but I will highlight the main three.

(1) The health professionals have different priorities, and to a certain extent, they all have a different way of working.

Furthermore, the HIV programme across the country are too fragmented.

(2) Some health professionals have the perception that HIV has nothing to do with their work or service they offer.

(3) The lack of capacity of the health professionals, which is constantly being argued and discussed."

HIV is a vital, crosscutting issue and as health professional our mission remains the same, to save lives. It is very important that health professionals get involved.

Do you have any messages for allied health professionals and other health workers?

"For sure! We all know that HIV is a medical condition and we are living in an era where the public still believe in the myth that HIV is the concern of the Ministry of Health only. It is important to note that, we, the health professionals, we should be at the forefront of the response but we need to equally take a stand to address the challenges that people are facing in order for them to see the HIV response through a different lens. If our role is to prevent new infection, therefore, we must empower people especially those that are at higher risk. If we are to provide treatment and care service, then, we must take necessary steps to ensure that the environment is conducive enough for access. We are seeing, now, that among the setbacks caused by COVID19 substantial increase in new HIV infections and AIDS related death are been noted. The most important thing that I feel we as health care providers should do is invest more in taking bold actions to ensure that all forms of structural inequalities that contributes greatly to people's vulnerability and put them at risk are eliminated.

Incremental changes will only happen if we harness our collective strengths grounded in evidence, science and respect of human to reduce the risks or mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS."



HIV is an incurable disease and involves long term treatment. The attributed cost will be a burden for the country.

Any messages for the general public?

"HIV stigma is still a challenging issue and it affects those who are infected with HIV as well as COVID, including their family and friends. It prevents them from accessing prevention, treatment and care support services. This is because there has been a lot of misinformation around how these diseases are spread, leaving those affected and infected to face rejection, social exclusion, abuse as well as stigma and discrimination.

We the people of Seychelles have an excellent opportunity to protect the new generation and change the course of our epidemics. To me, the magic bullet here is education! Educating our people about HIV and COVID19 and how they are transmitted and prevented, as well as how to support those affected or infected will provide them with the tools to fight both the spread and stigma of the diseases., that can free our small country from the dual crisis. Remember, HIV is a disease and people living with HIV want to live, not to be feared!



SOME KEY MESSAGE

from our **Educational Meeting** held at Coral Strand on the 19th and 26th November 2021 under the theme:

***“Allied Health Professionals
Amidst the COVID-19
Pandemic: Challenges and
Opportunities”***

What strikes me the most during the presentation was the fact that many patient was being neglected to be able to get the assistance or help they needed as us health workers was more focus on Covid-19 Pandemic as to prevent the disease from spreading.

Quite a lot of changes have to be done in our work place. Have to provide a safe environment for staff and patients.

Individuals are social [beings]. We need Psychological support if we are taking care of others, but who will take care of us.

Public and Private sectors should put aside their differences and come together to help in the fight against Covid-19.

Allied Heal Professionals are expected to compromise and yet all praises goes to nurses and doctors!

MOH should look for other Allied Health Professionals outside the Ministry to assist during the pandemic to prevent burn out.

All Allied Health care workers were equally affected by Covid pandemic [...], so overall one must not forget everybody need each other and we need to work together to reduce the overburden.



HAPPY LABOUR DAY



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