



Ministerial Statement

**THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SENIORS,
THE HON. PATRICIA GORDON-PAMPLIN JP, MP**

ON: The Beyond Wellness Medical Clinic

**13th September, 2013 at the
House of Assembly**

I would like to take this opportunity to dispel the erroneous newspaper article which indicated that medical clinic services will not be made available for six months.

In keeping with the commitment made by this government, I confirm that medical clinic services will be offered to those who require them, and that there will be a wellness component appended to the utilization of those services.

The approach being taken, which I will outline, provides a fulfillment of that promise in which the wellness component is first being satisfied, and further clinical services will be offered in the next phase.

Mr. Speaker,

That being said, I am pleased to provide an update on plans currently underway within the Ministry of Health and Seniors to address the escalating problem of chronic diseases in Bermuda, particularly their impact on the financially disadvantaged citizens of our island.

Mr. Speaker,

The persistent rise in complications due to diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease, has been well documented in the past several years. The impact of these chronic diseases has been shown to cripple individual health, reduce productivity, and they now represent a major factor in crippling our economy due to the accelerating cost of providing acute care for these conditions.

What makes this situation all the more unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, is that the chronic medical conditions which so negatively impact our community's health and economy are, for the most part, entirely preventable. We do not have to accept our current health statistics or the toll they take on the community.

Mr. Speaker,

What is needed is a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, systems-approach to the problem of chronic non-communicable diseases in our community. Managing chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease, including asthma, as well as obesity requires a multi-disciplinary, system-wide approach.

We can call these five conditions the "Big 5" and together, these chronic diseases should be considered Public Enemy Number 1. Improving the management of these five life-changing chronic medical conditions is the solution.

Mr. Speaker,

I am pleased to announce that the Community Health Section of the Department of Health has taken up the challenge to address the problem of chronic disease management, especially in our most vulnerable citizens - those who are without access to continuous medical management of their chronic diseases.

The Community Health Section has proposed a simple strategy for addressing this most pressing health problem in Bermuda. They have put forward a phased approach to improving chronic diseases management. The phases will be rolled out gradually over the next two years, but Phase

one will begin to be implemented in November in the form of a new public health service referred to as the Beyond Wellness Medical Clinic.

It is essential for everyone to understand that this new initiative does not purport to be the solution to the problem of chronic diseases management in Bermuda, or to even be the solution to fully addressing the needs of the financially under-privileged citizens in this regard.

However, we envision it as one important piece of the puzzle, a step in the right direction. It can serve to fill an important health service gap for those in financial need.

Mr. Speaker,

The complex medical, social, psychological, and financial needs of individuals with chronic non communicable diseases (NCO's) require a multi-pronged approach. There is no single panacea, no cure-all measure, for managing chronic diseases.

Also, no single health care setting can meet all these needs appropriately in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, most of the care involved in managing chronic medical conditions should and must be community-based.

Hospitals are designed for acute care. Chronic, non-acute medical problems have their solutions in community settings, in fact, even within the homes of our citizens.

Mr. Speaker,

The Ministry of Health and Seniors supports the concept of a phased approach to chronic disease management because we understand that complex, long-standing problems in society cannot be solved overnight or by "quick fixes". They require planning, resources and nonpartisan collaboration on solutions. We hope that a phased plan will allow these essential components to be assembled.

We also recognize the urgency of the situation, and that the escalating cost of our health care system can be improved if we support all citizens so that they are able to prevent chronic medical

conditions, to have access to early intervention when these conditions arise, and to manage their long term health needs in such a way that they never have health crises which require hospitalization.

We want to drive a portion of chronic disease management out of the acute care setting and into the more appropriate and financially sustainable community setting.

Mr. Speaker,

We are fortunate to have a well-resourced Chronic Disease Management Unit in Bermuda to carry some of the responsibility of managing clients with chronic medical conditions. Our Chronic Disease Management Unit located at Mid-Atlantic Wellness Institute does an excellent job of educating, supporting and managing the care of chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma and other chronic lung diseases.

However, not all members of the community are able to afford the cost of this care, much less the cost of frequent private physician visits and long term medication for their chronic illnesses.

Mr. Speaker,

We know that due to the current economic conditions, there are increasing numbers of Bermudians who have no insurance or, if they have insurance, they cannot afford to pay the copayment for frequent visits to health care professionals.

It is these individuals, the under-insured citizens of the country, which the Beyond Wellness Medical Clinic aims to attract and assist with chronic disease prevention and management.

To be clear, this initiative will be reaching out exclusively to uninsured or under-insured adults who have one or more of the "Big 5" chronic medical conditions mentioned earlier: diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease or obesity. The Beyond Wellness Medical Clinic will be introduced as a pilot initiative in November 2013, beginning with one afternoon per week. During the pilot phase, the Department of Health will begin to collect data to document the extent of the need for chronic disease management in uninsured and under-insured

Bermudian residents. It will also provide screening for these chronic diseases, early intervention and will coordinate treatment of the specified chronic diseases with private practitioners and with the Chronic Disease Management Unit of KEMH.

In the weeks ahead the specific services and further details of the Beyond Wellness Medical Clinic will be shared. However, the Department of Health is already busy identifying resources and planning for the implementation of this phase of the strategy to improve chronic diseases management on the island. Partnerships are being identified through a targeted outreach to the health care community.

Mr. Speaker,

It is in these areas of health care partnership, coordination and collaboration that we need much improvement. If improvements are to be seen in chronic disease management and health outcomes, the bonds of professional and inter-agency collaboration will need to be strengthened.

The health care team at the Department of Health will endeavor to reach out to every segment of the community to enlist their support and cooperation in this endeavor. In addition, the importance of personal responsibility for health will be reinforced with a wellness contract for service-users. There is a role for everyone to play in managing chronic medical conditions, particularly the affected individual.

To be successful, this initiative will rely on our community reaching unprecedented levels of health care collaboration and cooperation. There are many logistics to be worked out to assure that the necessary supports are in place for the population expected to attend the Beyond Wellness Medical Clinic.

It will be particularly important that the general public are well aware of the services of the proposed clinic and are equally clear on the limitations of the service. The Beyond Wellness Medical Clinic will not, and cannot, serve all individuals or assist with an unlimited variety of medical conditions. It is not intended to replace clinical services already well-established and successfully serving clients with special health needs.

For instance, it will not have the capacity or resources to assist clients with mental health diagnoses or chemical dependency problems. Services currently exist which address these conditions quite comprehensively.

This initiative cannot address all our health care problems. The Beyond Wellness Medical Clinic aims simply to be a first step in assuring that all individuals in our community, regardless of financial resources, have access to a continuum of care to help manage their chronic medical conditions.

Mr. Speaker,

Today, I am very pleased to have had a chance to share with this Honorable House the Ministry's evolving plan to improve chronic disease management for the most vulnerable members of our community - those with financial limitations which prevent them from obtaining the quality and continuity of medical care they require, and which we all deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.