



BARBADOS PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION OF PHARMACISTS

The Bridgetown Statement on the Role of the Pharmacist in the Prevention & Management of HIV/AIDS and in Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH) in Barbados and the Caribbean

Rationale:

According to the UNAIDS 2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, there were an estimated 33 million people living with HIV in 2007. The number of new infections in 2007 was 2.7 million people. ***“Despite some stabilization of the epidemic, new HIV cases are occurring at an unacceptably high level”***, the Hon. Donville Inniss, Minister of Health of Barbados told those attending the Symposium in Bridgetown on 4 and 5 February 2009 on “The Role of the Pharmacist in the Prevention and Management of Mother-to-Child Transmission of Aids”.

The overall number of people living with HIV/AIDS has increased over the last few years, partly due to the continued growth of new infections each year and also due to more widely available Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART) which helps reduce the rates of death associated with HIV. The percentage share of women living with AIDS has started increasing in several countries, as more social pressures are being put upon them. In Barbados, a rate of 25% of infections being women in 1986, has now changed so that this proportion is now well over 50% by 2007.

Of particular significance is the fact that worldwide some 2 million children under 5 are infected with HIV. Over 420,000 were newly infected in 2007 and some 270,000 children under 5 died from AIDS in that year. In real terms, that equates to around, 1,400 children becoming infected with HIV every single day! Over 90% of new infections amongst children occurred through mother-to-child transmission. Without any PMTCT interventions, up to 45% of children born to HIV positive women would get infected – approximately 5% during pregnancy, 20% during labour and at least 20% through breastfeeding.

In Barbados, the first HIV/AIDS case was known as little as 25 years ago in 1984. Since that time 3,408 cases of HIV/AIDS have been diagnosed of which 1,379 people (around 40%) have died. Some 2,029 people were known to be living with HIV/AIDS in Barbados at the end of 2007, with probably many more undiagnosed cases and people carrying HIV.

Most countries in the Caribbean have taken steps to prevent mother-to child transmissions and in Barbados the combination of increased HIV testing services and access to HAART has helped to reduce the mother-to-child transmission rate. The Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) programme in Barbados started in 1995 and in those 12 years the transmission rate has fallen from 27% to 2.5%. In that time, the proportion of pregnant women being tested for HIV has risen from under 40% to nearly 90%.

However, a number of challenges still remain, as the number of new infections continues to rise. There is still a big stigma attached to HIV/AIDS and it is suspected that many carriers of HIV remain undiagnosed. The cost of treatments remains very expensive and there are challenges in ensuring continuity of treatment –inpatient compliance and drug resistance. Although there has been a significant amount of publicity about the prevention of HIV/AIDS, many persons still engage in high risk lifestyles and the high level of publicity about the disease must continue.

Pharmacists can contribute their knowledge, skills and expertise in the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS and in Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH) and are committed to working collaboratively with National Control programmes in the support of nationwide goals. Pharmacists are

accessible health professionals who maintain the respect of their communities through provision of confidential and equitable service and care.

The commitment of the Pharmacy profession in Barbados and the Caribbean

At a participatory workshop on HIV/AIDS and MNCH, held on 5-6 February 2009 in Bridgetown, Barbados, and hosted by the Commonwealth Pharmacists' Association (CPA), the Barbados Pharmaceutical Society (BPS) and Caribbean Association of Pharmacists (CAP) about 140 members of the Pharmacy profession met to discuss the role of Pharmacists in the management of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS.

The predominating message to come from these discussions was that Pharmacists have the knowledge, skills and expertise which they believe could be more proactively applied to the control of these communicable diseases in Barbados and other parts of the Caribbean.

Furthermore, Caribbean Pharmacists present at the Symposium were united in their commitment to the communities they serve. To this end, Pharmacists want to provide a greater public health role in the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS, in Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH) specifically, and in health promotion generally.

The Bridgetown Statement is a compilation of recommendations made at the Workshop to expand the role of Pharmacists in practice settings in the prevention of these communicable diseases and in the continual improvement of accessibility to treatment and services by all members of the community in Barbados and the Caribbean. Further discussion, both within the profession and with the respective governments, will be necessary to define these roles in greater detail. In addition, The Bridgetown Statement is a declaration by the Pharmacists of Barbados and other areas of the Caribbean to affirm the commitment made by over two hundred Commonwealth Pharmacists at the CPA Conference in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in 2003 and to implement the recommendations of The Bridgetown Statement, as resources permit, to achieve beneficial health outcomes for the people of Barbados and the Caribbean.

General statements from the Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association "Ocho Rios Statement on the Role of the Pharmacist in the Prevention & Management of HIV/AIDS" Jamaica, August, 2003

- Pharmacists are members of multi-professional health care teams
- Pharmacists are the primary legal custodians of medicines and have the knowledge and expertise to provide authoritative information relating to medicines
- Pharmacists play an important role in helping to break down the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS
- Pharmacists can deliver professional treatment, advice and information in a caring and confidential environment
- Pharmacists will maintain patient privacy and confidentiality
- Pharmacists are committed to working with governments in the development and implementation of policies and strategies to improve access to information and in the provision of affordable and sustainable antiretroviral and antibiotic therapies

Courses of Action resulting from the Bridgetown Symposium on 4-5 February 2009

The following courses of action were agreed by the Symposium attendees to take forward in Barbados and other Caribbean countries as a result of the meeting in Bridgetown on 4 and 5 February 2009:-

- Pharmacists have an important role in providing treatment and care for HIV/AIDS patients and the Barbados Pharmaceutical Society (BPS) and other Caribbean countries should lobby governments to ensure that:
 - suitable training is given on undergraduate courses
 - post-graduate courses are available and held at frequent intervals to update Pharmacists
 - better communication and counselling skills should be available for all Pharmacists
- Multi-disciplinary training should be available on HIV/AIDS care and treatments which should involve Pharmacists.
- The Barbados Pharmaceutical Society and the Caribbean Association of Pharmacists should discuss how Pharmacists can help/support patients on the question of stigma relating to HIV/AIDS.
- Barbados Pharmaceutical Society should seek regulations to ensure all Pharmacies in private and public sector have a suitable Counselling area to provide privacy for patients
- Barbados Pharmaceutical Society and other Caribbean countries should seek regulations to ensure continued education is a requirement for continuation to practice as a pharmacist in their respective countries.
- Discussions should take place within Pharmaceutical Societies of the Caribbean with a view to introducing a professional requirement that there should be a fixed ratio of Pharmacist to Technician numbers in every Pharmacy.
- Pharmaceutical Societies of the Caribbean should press their Governments for better IT links with pharmacies to ensure that Pharmacists are in a better position to provide total care to patients, and especially in the area of HIV/AIDS.
- The Pharmaceutical Societies of the Caribbean should ensure that a professional requirement is introduced so that Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) are in place in Pharmacies for key activities - especially around HIV/AIDS care.
- The Pharmaceutical Societies of the Caribbean should press their respective Governments to ensure that supplies of HIV/AIDS treatments are made available through Pharmacies.
- The Pharmaceutical Societies of the Caribbean should actively lobby their Governments to ensure that Pharmacists are appointed to key positions to advise on the role of Pharmacists in patient care - and particularly in HIV/AIDS treatment and patient support.
- The Barbados Pharmaceutical Society should press Government departments to provide a decentralised system for HIV/AIDS care and treatment through approved local Pharmacies where suitable facilities and trained staff are available.
- The Pharmaceutical Societies of the Caribbean should actively consider how they could work together in lobbying their Governments to provide harmonisation of policies relating to the care of HIV/AIDS patients by Pharmacists across the Caribbean area.
- Pharmacy involvement of these activities should be widely publicised throughout Barbados and other parts of the Caribbean.

Other Matters to be considered:

Increasing Pharmacists' contribution to the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS and in MNCH in Barbados and the Caribbean

The Pharmaceutical Societies of the Caribbean will direct their efforts and resources towards:

1. advocating for sustainable and cost-effective partnerships between public and private sector stakeholders to co-ordinate improved patient access to HIV/AIDS and MNCH services leading to increased case detection, provision of referral information for counselling, testing and diagnosis and authoritative information on treatment options
2. working strategically with the relevant Ministries of Health and other government agencies to provide an enabling environment for the implementation of policies and strategies aimed at long-term sustainability of service provision to HIV/AIDS patients
3. facilitating member access to up-to-date information on antiretroviral therapy and international standards for HIV/AIDS care
4. providing members with continuing education programs on HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, with particular focus on access in outreach areas, or facilitating access to such programs provided by other institutions
5. promoting HIV/AIDS and MNCH awareness campaigns and providing relevant materials for members to undertake consumer and/or staff education and training activities, separately or in collaboration with other agencies
6. promoting the inclusion of Pharmacists in HIV/AIDS and MNCH management teams, especially in the area of clinical services and Drug and Therapeutic Committees
7. nominating Pharmacists to positions on national government and other professional Boards and Committees relating to HIV/AIDS and MNCH
8. nominating Pharmacists to government/industry decision-making committees to advise on the registration, procurement and the uninterrupted distribution of Pharmaceutical supply of HAART medication.
9. nominating Pharmacists to government decision-making committees to provide evidence-based medicines expertise during the development of treatment guidelines
10. reinforcing the relevant Society's professional code on ethical prescribing and dispensing

The Pharmaceutical Societies of the Caribbean will encourage their members to:

11. provide services without prejudice or discrimination and maintain patient confidentiality
12. use all available resources to remain informed and up-to-date on evidence-based treatment of HIV/AIDS in line with national and international treatment guidelines
13. train, or facilitate training, for support staff under supervision, in the provision of HIV/AIDS treatment and information
14. participate fully in locally and nationally initiated community HIV/AIDS and MNCH education and awareness campaigns
15. provide/negotiate/advocate for appropriate facilities for confidential patient counseling in Pharmacies, clinics and other workplaces

16. collaborate with other health care providers and with government initiatives in implementing a comprehensive care concept in the treatment of HIV/AIDS patients

The Role of the Pharmacist at Community Level

Given their accessibility, Pharmacists can help reduce HIV transmission by informing, educating and communicating with all members of the community in:

17. participating in awareness campaigns, e.g. World AIDS Day, to promote the Pharmacist as an authoritative and accessible source of information on HIV/AIDS and MNCH within the community
18. using daily opportunities to communicate prevention information to patients/consumers
19. providing information on counselling and testing services
20. referring patients/consumers to testing services to assist in early detection and diagnosis
21. providing consumer information on sexually transmitted infections, including referral services
22. spreading prevention messages using all available media outlets: newspaper advice columns, talkback radio, TV interviews and community health announcements
23. participating in community, school and faith-based activities
24. supporting other community-based HIV prevention programmes

Pharmacists can deliver quality treatment and care for HIV patients by:

25. maintaining high standards of pharmacy practice and observing any official Codes of Practice
26. working as members of multi-disciplinary healthcare teams
27. acquiring skills in patient counseling
28. providing quality pharmacist/patient interaction to promote adherence and optimise treatment outcomes (monitoring treatment, providing information on medicines, nutrition and opportunistic infections)
29. promoting holistic and wellness concepts to HIV positive patients and providing psycho-social support or referral to support service providers
30. supporting families within nationally agreed guidelines on MNCH supported by the respective governments, or referring patients to appropriate facilities, where they are available
31. treating opportunistic infections, including sexually transmitted infections, within treatment guidelines prescribed by a clinician
32. maintaining patient medication records with appropriate sharing of patient histories between service providers
33. recording and notifying incidents of observed drug resistance
34. ensuring an up-to-date knowledge of the national HIV/AIDS Guidelines

The Role of the Pharmacist at Government Level:

Working with the Pharmaceutical Societies within the Caribbean, Pharmacists can:

35. build working relationships with politicians and officials within the respective Ministries of Health
36. contribute to policy development and implementation as it relates to Pharmacy practice, Pharmacy education and public health (with special focus on reducing stigma and discrimination)
37. advocate for and assist governments and relevant authorities in the development and use of evidence-based treatment guidelines
38. advocate for and assist government and appropriate agencies to combat the importation and distribution of counterfeit and substandard medicines
39. advocate for increased employment of pharmacists in drug procurement and distribution nationwide
40. advocate and negotiate with governments to increase patient access to affordable and sustainable antiretroviral therapy, for antenatal patients where appropriate
41. advocate and negotiate with government to increase patient access to information and services in the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases
42. work with the Universities to review the curriculum to ensure it meets the changing trends and requirements of Pharmacy practice in Barbados and other parts of the Caribbean
43. work with government to formulate strategies and incentives to encourage Pharmacists to work in outreach areas to ensure adequate human resources for the delivery of quality treatment and care

The Role of the Pharmacist in Collaboration with other Organisations

Working collaboratively, the Pharmaceutical Societies of the Caribbean and their members can maximise impact by:

44. interacting with other health professionals in the design and implementation of HIV prevention strategies
45. interacting with networks of people living with HIV to better meet their needs and requirements
46. interacting with other health professionals to optimise treatment and care of HIV patients, in both hospital and community settings
47. joining with other health-related professional organisations in the hosting of inter-professional workshops, seminars and continuing educational lectures
48. assisting major data collecting agencies to strengthen and improve systems for the strategic use of HIV/AIDS and MNCH related information
49. promoting medical and Pharmacy practice research throughout the Caribbean
50. continue to involve Pharmacy and other health-related student bodies in the Barbados Pharmaceutical Society and Caribbean Association of Pharmacists' activities