



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

ST. AUGUSTINE, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, WEST INDIES

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

HEU, CENTRE FOR HEALTH ECONOMICS

Sir George Alleyne Building, 25A Warner Street St. Augustine

Tel: (868) 645-7351, 645-5465; Fax: (868) 662-9459; Email: Centre.HealthEconomics@sta.uwi.edu

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Re: Debriefing Note on Presentations and Discussions at the 14th Caribbean Conference on National Health Financing Initiatives held at Royalton Antigua Resort and Spa, Antigua and Barbuda, October 19-21, 2022

1. Background

In response to requests from policymakers to ‘do more for improving health systems’, Heads of Caribbean Social Security Organizations at a meeting in Belize City in 2005, decided to establish a Forum—starting with a Regional Conference—for activities to build and enhance capacity in designing, implementing and effectively managing national health financing initiatives.

After the initial Conference in the Turks and Caicos Islands in 2006, discussions and activities have been continuing during follow-up Conferences in Aruba (2007); Trinidad and Tobago (2008); St. Maarten (2009); Belize (2010); Bermuda (2011); Curacao (2012); Jamaica (2013); Trinidad and Tobago (2014); Turks and Caicos Islands (2015); Bonaire (2016); Suriname (2018); and Anguilla (2019).

The 14th Conference, convened after an enforced delay due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, was held at The Royalton Antigua Resort and Spa in Antigua and Barbuda from October 19-21, 2022.

2. Objectives

The overall objectives of these Conferences are to share knowledge, increase understanding, test ideas, enhance national expertise and deepen regional collaboration in designing and managing national health financing initiatives.

In keeping with previous Conferences that selected specific issues for deeper analysis, the 14th Conference focused attention on ‘*Confronting the Financing Challenges of COVID-19 and the Unfinished Universal Health Coverage Agenda in the Caribbean*’.

3. Host

In collaboration with the coordinator, The University of the West Indies, HEU, Centre for Health Economics (UWI-HEU), the 14th Conference was hosted by the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment (MOHWE) and the Medical Benefits Scheme (MBS) of Antigua and Barbuda. Further support was provided by the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), as well as a mix of local, regional and extra-regional sponsors.

4. Planning Team

The Conference Planning Committee included Dr. Stanley Lalta, Ms. Charmaine Metivier and other staff members from The UWI-HEU, as well as teams from the MOHWE and the MBS of Antigua and Barbuda headed by the Permanent Secretary, Ms. Ena Dalso-Henry and CEO, Mr. Kevin Silston respectively.

5. Participation

The Conference attracted around 70 full-time participants from 14 countries, as well as 10 public and private organizations. Participants included:-

- senior officers in Caribbean Social Security Organizations;
- senior managers and health practitioners from Ministries of Health;
- senior officers from national/social health financing programs;
- representatives of local and international organizations in financing, health insurance, actuarial science and health services management;
- representatives of universities, hospitals, health and IT consulting firms; and
- specially invited expert presenters.

6. Program Content

a) Formal Opening

Chaired and welcomed by Dr. Teri-Ann Joseph, Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Antigua and Barbuda, the Formal Opening featured a mix of speeches on expectations at the Conference and local cultural events. More than 110 persons comprising participants and specially invited guests from the government, public and private sectors in Antigua and Barbuda attended this event.

In addressing and opening the Conference, the Honourable Minister of Health, Wellness and the Environment of Antigua and Barbuda, Sir Molwyn Joseph highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic severely tested the health system and affected all sectors and communities. He emphasized government's commitment to universal health coverage through transformation of the role of the MBS and strengthening primary care systems. He asked participants to optimize the learning opportunities presented by the Conference for new knowledge, ideas and capabilities to enhance the functioning of their health financing systems.

Other speakers bringing greetings from their organizations included Senator Osbert Frederick, Chairman of the MBS; Dr. Anton Cumberbatch on behalf of Dr. Althea La Foucade, Director of The UWI-HEU; Dr. Guillermo Sandoval on behalf of Dr. James Fitzgerald, Director of Health Systems and Services at PAHO; and Dr. Maglan Richardson, Acting Director of the Anguilla Social Security Board.

Dr. Stanley Lalta, Conference Program Coordinator, drew attention to the theme of the Conference—‘Confronting the Financing Challenges of COVID-19 and the Unfinished Universal Health Coverage Agenda in the Caribbean’—and provided a rapid overview of the structure and content of the presentations featured in the Conference’s program.

The Vote of Thanks was offered by the Permanent Secretary of the MOHWE, Ms. Ena Dalso-Henry.

b) Presentations and Discussions—Feature Papers

- ‘COVID-19: Lessons from Managing the Public Health, Economic and Political Challenges’ by Sir Molwyn Joseph, Hon. Minister of Health, Wellness and the Environment, Antigua and Barbuda;
- ‘COVID-19, Universal Health Coverage and the Importance of Renewed Investment in Essential Public Health Services’ by Dr. Natalia Houghton, Advisor on Health Systems and Services at PAHO (Online Presentation);
- ‘Macro-fiscal Challenges in the Caribbean: Is There Space for Increased Investment in Health?’ by Dr. Valda Henry, Deputy Governor, Eastern Caribbean Central Bank; and
- ‘Five Decades of Mandatory Health Insurance (1970) in Bermuda: Performance, Challenges and Sustainability’ by Dr. Ricky Braithwaite, CEO of the Bermuda Health Council.

c) Presentations and Discussions—Sessional Thematic Papers

- ‘Strategic Planning Approaches to Optimise Sustainability of Health Financing Agencies’ by Mr. Raphael Barrett, Health Management Consultant from Jamaica (Online Presentation);
- ‘Health Financing Risks and Sustainability in the Caribbean: Actuarial Perspectives’ by Mr. Derek Osborne and Mr. Howard Cimring, Partners at LifeWorks, Canada;
- ‘Negotiating the Re-insurance Market by Health Financing Agencies in Small Countries’ by Mr. Armando Echeverry, Senior VP of International Reinsurance Managers, USA; and
- ‘Hospital Excellence and Sustainability in the Caribbean: Not Why or When But How?’ by Dr. Dexter James, CEO, Millenium Heights Medical Complex, St. Lucia (Online Presentation).

d) Presentations and Discussions—Panel Discussion Papers

There were six (6) Panels discussing the following matters:-

Panel 1: Managing COVID-19 Within the Context of Universal Health Coverage

- ‘Managing COVID-19: The Importance and Influence of Collaboration with Local, Regional and International Partners’ by Dr. Rhonda Sealey-Thomas, Chief Medical Officer of Antigua and Barbuda;
- ‘Managing COVID-19: Impact on Hospital Activities and Effectiveness of Responses’ by Dr. Victor Castillo, CEO of Fundacion Cardiovascular of Colombia;
- ‘Managing COVID-19: Perspectives from the Business Sector’ by Mr. Emil Lee, Business Executive, St. Maarten; and
- ‘Managing COVID-19: What Can We Learn from the Public’s Response to the Pandemic’ by Prof. Leslie Walwyn, Head of the Global Health Program at the American University of Antigua.

Panel 2: Managing COVID-19: Coping Strategies by Health Financing Agencies

- ‘Health Sector Reforms to Secure Universal Coverage in Aruba’ by Dr. Lex de Jong, Health Care Activist, Aruba;
- ‘COVID-19 and BVI-NHI: Impact, Operational Adjustment and Coping Measures’ by Mr. Roy Barry, Deputy Director of the National Health Insurance, British Virgin Islands;
- ‘COVID-19 and SVB/CURE: Impact, Operational Adjustments and Coping Measures’ by Mr. Gerbert Spijker, Director of Basic Health Insurance Plan, Curacao; and
- ‘COVID-19 and the Department of Health in Curacao: Impact, Operational Adjustments and Coping Measures’ by Ms. Jeanine Constansia-Kook, Director of Ministry of Health, Environment and Nature, Curacao.

Panel 3: Getting to UHC—Experiences from Mature Health Financing Agencies

- ‘Mandatory Health Insurance and CINICO’s Role: Performance, Challenges and Sustainability Challenges’ by Mr. Michael Gayle, CEO of CINICO, Cayman Islands; and
- ‘Four Decades of Medical Benefits Scheme (1978): Performance, Challenges and Sustainability’ by Mr. Kevin Silston, CEO, Medical Benefits Scheme of Antigua and Barbuda.

Panel 4: Getting to UHC—Advances and New Strategies

- ‘Rolling Out NHI for Total Population Coverage in Belize: Administrative and Financial Plans’ by Dr. Ramon Figueroa, General Manager of National Health Insurance, Belize;
- ‘Rolling Out NHI Beyond Primary Care in The Bahamas: Administrative and Financial Plans’ by Ms. Christy Butler, Manager, National Health Insurance in The Bahamas;
- ‘Status of and Strategies for Health Financing Reforms to Secure Universal Coverage in Barbados’ by Mr. Danny Gill, Health Financing Commissioner, Barbados; and
- ‘Management Challenges in a Multi-Portfolio Health Financing Agency: The National Health Fund in Jamaica’ by Ms. Grace Ann Johnson and Mr Ainsley Jones, Pharmacy Division of the National Health Fund in Jamaica.

Panel 5: Strengthening Health Financing Systems for Universal Coverage

- ‘PAHO’s Plans and Programs for Advancing UHC in the Caribbean’ by Dr. Guillermo Sandoval, Advisor on Health Economics and Financing, PAHO Caribbean Office, Barbados;
- ‘Lessons from Application of WHO’s Health Financing Progress Matrix in Two Caribbean Countries’ by Ms. Charmaine Metivier of UWI-HEU, Mr. Danny Gill, Barbados and Mr Kevin Silston, Antigua and Barbuda (Tabled only); and
- ‘Advancing Financial Protection Measures in Caribbean UHC Plans’ by Mr. Don Bethelmie, Economist, UWI-HEU (Online Presentation).

Panel 6: New Directions in Universal Coverage and Health Financing

- ‘MIS-IT Applications in Public and Private Health Facilities in the Caribbean’ by Mr. Shekhar Reddy, Director of Health Applications, Advanced Integrated Systems Inc, Jamaica;
- ‘Leveraging Healthcare Claims Data to Generate Actionable Insights’ by Mr. Dennis Arrindell, Accounts Manager, SVB/CURE in Curacao;

- ‘Experience with IT Applications for Health Claims Processing: Are We Achieving Value for Money?’ by Ms. Marisia James, Assistant VP of Eastern Caribbean Operations and Manager, Antigua and Barbuda Branch of Sagicor Inc.; and
- ‘Controlling the Health and Financing Burden of Childhood Obesity’ by Medical Students of the American University of Antigua.

e) Conferences Progress Report

Dr. Stanley Lalta, Program Coordinator, presented a review of activities and progress over the 14 Conferences (Turks and Caicos Islands, 2006; Aruba, 2007; Trinidad and Tobago, 2008; St. Maarten, 2009; Belize, 2010; Bermuda, 2011; Curacao, 2012; Jamaica, 2013; Trinidad and Tobago, 2014; Turks and Caicos Islands, 2015; Bonaire, 2016; Suriname, 2018; Anguilla, 2019; Antigua and Barbuda, 2022).

He referred to the Conferences’ overall objectives as outlined by heads of Social Security Organizations in Belize in 2005 and highlighted key aspects pertaining to the level of participation; key topics covered in feature, sessional, panel and special presentations as well as issues identified by participants for further consideration.

7. Suggested Actions for the 15th Conference

The Conference recommended that actions be taken:-

- i) To give particular attention to ‘Governance’; ‘Public-Private Partnerships in Health’; ‘Effective Health Promotion/Illness Prevention Strategies’; ‘Revenue Generation Experiences with Sin Taxes’; and ‘Defining Benefit Packages’ in subsequent Conferences;
- ii) To specially target participation in future Conferences by representatives of national Ministries of Finance;
- iii) To prepare a list and profile of ‘experts’ as well as ‘documents’ which may be accessed by countries to assist with designing or implementing specific aspects of health financing policies;
- iv) To introduce changes in the format of presentations and discussions with some dedicated ‘interactive policy dialogue and problem solving’ sessions; and
- v) To accept the offer of the Fundacion Cardiovascular of Colombia (FCV) to host of the 15th Conference.

8. Acknowledgements

The Conference formally thanked the collaborating organizations—The UWI-HEU, MOHWE, MBS, as well as PAHO—for their roles and collective efforts in convening the Conference. Special thanks were also extended to the local, regional and extra-regional sponsors who provided financial, in-kind and other resources to support the Conference.


9. Access to Documents


Presentations made at the Conference may be accessed from the Conference's Website (<http://conferences.sta.uwi.edu/healthfinancing/>) or from the Office of The University of the West Indies, HEU, Centre for Health Economics, Trinidad and Tobago.

10. Information Requests and Recommendations for Future Action

Requests for information pertaining to previous Conferences and recommendations for future action may be directed to the Program Coordinator, Dr. Stanley Lalta (stanleylalta@gmail.com) or to Ms. Charmaine Metivier, Assistant Coordinator (Charmaine.Metivier@sta.uwi.edu) or the Office of the HEU, Centre for Health Economics (Telephone: 1-868-662-9459 or 1-868-645-7351).

Yours sincerely,


Dr. Althea La Foucade
Director, UWI-HEU
Trinidad and Tobago


Mr. Kevin Silston
CEO, Medical Benefits Scheme
Antigua and Barbuda