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PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Health & Wellness Launches HEARTS in the Americas Initiative

Belmopan, October 20, 2023.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness (MoHW), in partnership with the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the European Union (EU), is pleased to announce the official launch of HEARTS in the Americas initiative in Belize.

HEARTS in the Americas is a groundbreaking effort aimed at improving cardiovascular health and preventing heart disease. Its primary goal is to reduce the burden of cardiovascular diseases and their risk factors by implementing proven, cost-effective interventions.

Cardiovascular diseases, such as heart disease and stroke, pose significant health challenges in Belize and globally. These conditions not only affect the quality of life but also place a heavy burden on health care systems. The launch of HEARTS in the Americas initiative signifies Belize's commitment to addressing this issue.

Key components of the initiative include:

1. **Hypertension Management:** Focusing on improving the diagnosis and management of hypertension, one of the major risk factors for heart disease and stroke.
2. **Tobacco Control:** Implementing strategies to reduce tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke is a crucial step in preventing heart disease.
3. **Salt Reduction:** Encouraging the reduction of salt intake in diets to lower the risk of hypertension and related cardiovascular issues.

4. Healthy Lifestyle Promotion: Promoting healthier lifestyles, including regular physical activity and balanced nutrition.

Funding support for the project is provided by the EU and the Universal Health Coverage Partnership. The MoHW will work diligently with the PAHO/WHO, other partners in health and communities to ensure the success of this initiative in Belize. Furthermore, the launch of the HEARTS in Americas initiative is a major step in the right direction and a testament of the ministry's commitment to building a healthier nation.

WHO launched the Global HEARTS Initiative and its HEARTS Technical Package in 2016. The initiative is being implemented and expanded across 33 countries in the Americas with Belize formally launching today. It is expected that this will be the institutionalized model of care for cardiovascular disease risk management, including hypertension, diabetes, and dyslipidemia, in primary health care in the Americas by 2025.

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