



THE HEART FOUNDATION OF JAMAICA

Founded in 1971 by the Lions Club of Kingston

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Heart Foundation of Jamaica warns against “the silent killer”

Seventy-eighty percent (78%) of persons screened for high blood pressure by the Heart Foundation of Jamaica (HFJ) in 2012 were found to be either pre-hypertensive, or fall within stage one or stage 2 category of hypertension. Of this amount forty four percent (44%) were not aware of their condition also known as “the silent killer”.

This was disclosed by the Executive Director of the Heart Foundation of Jamaica (HFJ), Mrs Deborah Chen, at the Launch of Heart Month held yesterday at the Spanish Court Hotel. Each year, the HFJ celebrates the month of February as Heart Month.

Heart disease continues to be the leading causes of death in Jamaica. During Heart Month, the Foundation usually organizes and carries out a variety of activities to further sensitize the Jamaican Community about issues related to heart disease. This year the activities which were launched by the Honourable Minister of Health Dr. Fenton Ferguson, includes a plaza promotion, a medical symposium, three outside broadcasts and visits to twenty two (22) health centres islandwide within the context of the theme “**Know Your Numbers**”. The Foundation’s Go Red Ambassador for Women Mrs. Thalia Lyn also endorsed the theme.

Consultant cardiologist at the HFJ, Dr. Camille Christian stressed the importance of individuals knowing what is a normal blood pressure reading is, and what their reading is. The same goes for cholesterol, blood sugar, their waist measurement, their BMI, HbA1C. She said that the public also need to know how to read the nutritional content on labels as undesirable numbers are risk factors for heart disease.

According to the Jamaica Health and Lifestyle Survey of 2007-8, 25% of Jamaicans have hypertension and almost half of this number, or some 25,000 persons have had a stroke. Approximately 12,000 persons have suffered a heart attack; 65% of women and 38% of men are overweight, while 86% of persons with high cholesterol are unaware of their disease status.

The HFJ offers screening in-house, on their mobile screening programme at health centres across the island, select supermarkets, and at health fairs and corporate offices by invitation.

Last year, the Foundation's life-saving screening services received a boost from the CHASE Fund which facilitated the purchase of a Stress Treadmill and three 24-hour Holter Monitors at a cost of just under J\$5.4 million. The Foundation now boasts a full cardiac suite and offers advanced heart tests. These include:

- Electrocardiogram (ECG)
- Echocardiogram
- 24 hr Holter Monitor
- 48 hr Holter Monitor
- Stress ECG/Treadmill
- Stress Echocardiogram
- 24 hr Ambulatory Blood Pressure
- Pacemaker Evaluation

As an endorsement of the work of the HFJ, major Heart Month sponsor Welch's, a global leader in fruit beverages, distributed locally by Wisynco, will donate three per cent of its February Sales to the HFJ. This initiative is aimed at raising awareness of heart and blood vessel diseases and to support programmes that help to find solutions. Other Heart Month sponsors are Fidelity Motors, Quaker Oats and Blue Diamond Almond Breeze Milk.

The HFJ was established in 1971 by the Lions Club of Kingston in an effort to minimize the incidence of death from heart disease in Jamaica. The Foundation is a registered, non-profit organization supported by voluntary contributions, its own fundraising efforts and heavily subsidized user fees. In 2012 alone, over 88,000 Jamaicans from all walks of life used the services of the Foundation.

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