



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

UWI scientists provide daily COVID-19 surveillance and monitoring

Regional Headquarters Jamaica. Thursday, April 30, 2020. Daily surveillance and modelling of COVID-19 from the George Alleyne Chronic Disease Research Centre (GA-CDRC) at The University of the West Indies (The UWI) is now publicly available to provide evidence-based decision-making in the Caribbean. The Centre's reports gathered currently from 20 Caribbean countries can be accessed at www.uwi.edu/covid19/surveillance.

It functions as an 'observatory' for confirmed COVID-19 cases, deaths and outbreak growth rates for fourteen (14) CARICOM countries and six UK Overseas Territories, as well as regional heat map models. These daily surveillance updates and summary reports produced by UWI researchers were recently presented at a special emergency meeting of CARICOM Heads of Government. They received the endorsement of CARICOM's Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) and are made available to aid governments and the public in their COVID-19 response efforts. The Centre is particularly working closely with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) to model the epidemic and project healthcare needs.

Professor of Biostatistics at the GA-CDRC, Ian Hambleton noted that surveillance "is vital for the work and the responses we are now making in this crisis. We've all had to be slightly reactionary when it comes to the surveillance process across the world." He also cautioned, "If we are to get ahead of the potential next crisis now is the time to be thinking about the resilience of our surveillance structures."

Professor Hambleton was speaking during an online discussion hosted by the GA-CDRC scientists on April 22 entitled, *UWI on the frontline: Combatting COVID-19 through data*. Commenting on the importance of this kind of research being made widely available he said, "We are no longer isolated communities. We are not even an isolated region. We are part of one big global community. For me that means a renewed understanding of how we need to openly share data. The more data we can share and the more openly, the better we can inform governments and communities on how they can respond to these issues."

Deputy Dean of Research at the Centre, Dr Madhuvanti Murphy clarified how surveillance is used to inform decision-making that can impact trajectories on non-pharmaceutical interventions such as 'national lockdowns'. She and the other scientists on the panel acknowledged that many regional governments began implementing interventions early; some even before having reported their first case in an effort to suppress the epidemic. Adding to this, Professor Hambleton

stressed the need for surveillance to inform countries' decisions going forward. "It's really important to say that it's still very early days for the Caribbean. The outbreak picture is going to change daily so daily monitoring of new cases and new deaths can guide changes to national responses and it can contribute in the future to discussions of when governments might consider a gentle easing of the controls that they currently have in place," he said.

Dr Kim Quimby, Senior Lecturer in Immunology at GA-CDRC echoed this, pointing out that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has identified guidelines for countries to lift restrictions that were put in place to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the region but cautioned that increased testing and heightened surveillance will be key to achieving that goal.

The team of panellists on the forum also included Dr Natasha Sobers, Lecturer in Public Health and Epidemiology and the session was jointly moderated by Drs Natalie Greaves and Heather Harewood, Lecturers in Public Health at The UWI Cave Hill Campus' Faculty of Medical Sciences.

The recorded broadcast of the discussion forum: *'UWI on the frontline: Combatting COVID-19 through data'* will air on UWItv's cable channel on Flow EVO on Saturday May 2, 2020 at 9:00 p.m. JA / 10:00 p.m. EC and Sunday May 3, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. JA / 10:00 a.m. EC.

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About the George Alleyne Chronic Disease Research Centre (GA-CDRC)

Since 1992, the GA-CDRC has developed a strong track record in performing population-based epidemiological research, with a focus on surveillance of chronic non-communicable disease (NCD) incidence, prevalence, and risk factors. Its focus has recently expanded beyond documenting the NCD epidemic, to offering solutions aimed at improving the health status of the people of the Caribbean. The GA-CDRC is a unit of the Caribbean Institute for Health Research (CAIHR) with headquarters on the Mona Campus in Jamaica. As a specialised centre of The UWI, CAIHR's primary focus is Caribbean, with a renewed mandate to increase research outputs in major areas affecting the health of regional populations, and in the number of trained health research scientists, while promoting more uptake and translation of research into healthcare policy, programmes and interventions. Visit the CAIHR website here (link to CAIHR site: <http://uwi.edu/caihr/index.php>) and the GA-CDRC website here (link to <http://www.uwi.edu/cdrc/cdrc-home>).

About The UWI

For over 70 years The University of the West Indies (The UWI) has provided service and leadership to the Caribbean region and wider world. The UWI has evolved from a university college of London in Jamaica with 33 medical students in 1948 to an internationally respected, regional university with near 50,000

students and five campuses: [Mona](#) in Jamaica, [St. Augustine](#) in Trinidad and Tobago, [Cave Hill](#) in Barbados, [Five Islands](#) in Antigua and Barbuda and an [Open Campus](#). As part of its robust globalization agenda, The UWI has established partnering centres with universities in North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe including the [State University of New York \(SUNY\)-UWI Center for Leadership and Sustainable Development](#); the Canada-Caribbean Institute with Brock University; the Strategic Alliance for Hemispheric Development with Universidad de los Andes (UNIANDES); The UWI-China Institute of Information Technology, the University of Lagos (UNILAG)-UWI Institute of African and Diaspora Studies; the Institute for Global African Affairs with the University of Johannesburg (UJ); The UWI-University of Havana Centre for Sustainable Development; The UWI-Coventry Institute for Industry-Academic Partnership with the University of Coventry and the Glasgow-Caribbean Centre for Development Research with the University of Glasgow.

The UWI offers over 800 certificate, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate degree options in Food & Agriculture, Engineering, Humanities & Education, Law, Medical Sciences, Science & Technology, Social Sciences and Sport.

As the region's premier research academy, The UWI's foremost objective is driving the growth and development of the regional economy. The world's most reputable ranking agency, Times Higher Education, has ranked The UWI among the top 600 universities in the world for 2019 and 2020, and the 40 best universities in Latin America and the Caribbean for 2018 and 2019. The UWI has been the only Caribbean-based university to make the prestigious lists. For more, visit www.uwi.edu.

(Please note that the proper name of the university is The University of the West Indies, inclusive of the "The", hence The UWI.)