

Community support needed in fight against COVID-19 pandemic



Health Promotion Officers explaining how the virus spreads to a group of councillors during an awareness campaign.



Councillors listening attentively during an awareness campaign at Holy Trinity Teachers College.

The Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) is appealing to all ward councillors, village court magistrates and community leaders to play an active role in the dissemination of vital information on the corona virus pandemic in their respective communities.

The authority has conducted awareness and

not visited and this is where leaders are required to assist.

The public must understand that corona virus has the potential to be a deadly disease which the authority is very concerned about and is doing everything it can to advise them about how it spreads and what they can do to avoid contracting it.

There have been instances where people, especially young men have harassed and intimidated health promotion officers while conducting awareness at roadside markets, bus stops and settlements in Mt Hagen City and this must stop.

Those who are doing this are very selfish and their actions clearly demonstrates their ignorance and lack of understanding and respect for the many innocent people who may be affected through no fault of their own.

Acting Chief Executive Officer for the WHPHA, Ms Jane Holden said she was aware that there are some concerns regarding allowances for

Councillors but that is an issue for District and Provincial Governments. She thanked those who have taken a lead in spreading the message and asked others to put the welfare of their people at the forefront.

She said there were a lot of financial issues faced by the country with the health sector not getting its full share of the National Budget to help hospitals prepare well for the corona virus pandemic and urged the leaders to understand and do what they can for their people.

She added that the corona virus has no boundaries and there is no evidence to suggest it will not come to the Western Highlands Province.



Health Promotion Officer, Elizabeth Pundu addressing councillors during the awareness campaign at Holy Trinity Teachers College.

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WHPHA RECEIVES MUCH NEEDED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) will now be able to purchase essential drugs for patients which the Area Medical Store cannot supply. It will also purchase new urology equipment, build a shed for an incinerator and diesel to allow its fleet to stay on the road, all, thanks to the Sir Brian Bell Foundation.

The Foundation has provided funds to meet these costs largely supporting the Regional Hospital as well as purchasing a new generator set for the Bukapena Health Centre at a total cost of more than K235,000.

The commitment is part of the Foundation's ongoing support for health and education in the country and it follows a brief meeting held in Mt Hagen recently between the WHPHA CEO, David Vorst, his A/Director of Clinical Network and Mt Hagen Hospital Manager, Jane Holden and Foundation Director, Ian Clough.

The executives discussed among other issues, the financial difficulties experienced by Mt Hagen Hospital and other facilities in light of the current financial constraints faced by the country and the lack of funding for the operations of the WHPHA.

Whilst there remain other challenges, the areas funded needed immediate attention.

Acting Chief Executive Officer for the WHPHA, Jane Holden said she was very grateful for the financial assistance as it helps solve some of the urgent financial needs of the hospital and the rural facilities.

She said the Foundation has a history of supporting the WHPHA when in August 2017 it donated 39 cartons of drapes, gowns, bedsheets and drawsheets, as well as supporting



The old incinerator shed which will be pulled down and replaced with a new one using the donated funds.

attendance of clinicians at professional meetings twice - and she was very happy for the commitment which she said had been made at a time when the Authority needed it most.

Ms Holden said this donation was unexpected and thanked the Foundation's Chief Executive Officer, Ms Bronwyn Wright and Director Ian Clough for their generosity which allowed the WHPHA to continue to provide essential services to the thousands of patients who sought its support every week.



A backhoe clearing the area for a new incinerator shed to be built.

Eight more CHWs graduate as midwives

The Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) has graduated another eight Community Health Workers with midwifery skills under its CHW Upskilling Training Program.

The graduates were presented with their certificates during a graduation ceremony at the Mt Hagen Hospital Chapel in early March. This was the 7th graduation under this program.

The all-female group who represented community health posts in the province and who lived on the hospital campus to undergo their training had gone through six months of intensive training in both theory and practical, mostly in maternal health and midwifery skills.

Facilitator of the course, Sr. Jolly Kulimbua said presentations by some of the CHWs who had completed their training and were providing the services had shown that such training was important as it helped them save the lives of many mothers and babies.

She said such vital training would not have been possible without the generous sponsorship of donor agencies such as UNICEF, Soroptomist International, DFAT and WHPHA and thanked them all for their continued support.

The graduation of the 8 CHWs brings to 63, the total number of staff from the WHPHA who have been upskilled with midwifery skills since the

training commenced in 2012. Western Highlands is one of 12 provinces in the county who are conducting the CHW Upskilling Training Program.

Sr Jolly said UNICEF had funded the training for the second time in a row and she was very happy for its continued support and thanked its representative, Sr Paula Puawe Konga who was present for the graduation.

She said Marie Stopes had also contributed towards the training by imparting valuable skills to the CHWs who used them to treat patients and she was happy for their contribution as well.

The participants said they were very happy for the training they had received, saying it would help them to save the lives of many mothers and their babies in the rural areas whom they were unable to save previously.

Members of the Management team who



The CHWs ready to receive their certificates

witnessed the graduation spoke highly of the training program, saying it had significantly helped to reduce the mortality rate in the province and wanted to see all CHWs in the rural facilities upskilled with midwifery skills.

Komkui people receive health services at their doorstep

The people of Komkui and neighbouring villages in the Hagen Central District of Western Highlands will now receive health services at their doorstep.

This follows the opening of a new Community Health Post (CHP) at Wagbel village on the outskirts of Mt Hagen City towards the end of March 2020.

The CHP cost more than K1 million to build and was funded jointly by the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) on a kina for kina basis where every kina the WHPHA had spent had been equally matched by DFAT.

The Member for Hagen Open and Minister for Commerce and Industry, Hon William Duma had also contributed K100,000 towards the setting up of the facility.

Deputy Chairman of the WHPHA Board, Mr Michael Pundia officially opened the facility on 20th March, witnessed by about 200 people from the local community as well as members of the Provincial Health Authority senior executive management.

A women's "weldo" (dance) group dressed in traditional costume led the dignitaries to the main stage for the official opening of the CHP which would serve more than 12,000 people from the local community as well as the surrounding areas.

Many of the local leaders who spoke at the ceremony including Councillor Jacob Wari and his predecessor, Mr Thomas Wama thanked the WHPHA for building the CHP in their area and urged their people to look after it well.



Above - the new CHP at Wagbel and below right, guests arriving for the official opening. Below left - Deputy Board Chairman, Michael Pundia (left) and Cr Jacob Wari cutting the ribbon to declare the CHP officially open.

Director for Clinical Excellence, Research and Training, Dr Paulus Ripa said the WHPHA wanted to provide a quality health service for the people and would make available four senior clinicians including a health extension officer, nurse and a midwife to work there.

He said in the next two years the WHPHA would aim to upskill many of its staff at Mt Hagen Hospital as well as in the rural facilities in order to lift the

standard of services provided at these facilities.

He also told the people that Mt Hagen Hospital would only attend to referrals and urged them to seek treatment for minor illnesses such as cold, flu and headache at the nearest facility.

Dr Ripa said children should also be immunised against deadly diseases such as measles, polio and



whooping cough to protect them from contracting these diseases at an early age.

Deputy Board Chairman, Michael Pundia when opening the CHP told the people to trust and have confidence in national doctors, nurses and other health workers to treat them well.

He said the WHPHA had trust and confidence in the Komkui community to look after essential services provided such as the new CHP and urged them to show that by looking after the facility and its staff well.



Do not visit Mt Hagen Hospital with minor illnesses



Ms Holden with some clinicians in preparation mode for Covid-19

minor illnesses at Mt Hagen Hospital during this time of the corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Those with illnesses such as cold, flu and headache should go to the nearest health facility if they need advice because they will be sent back there by the Hagen Hospital.

This is because the hospital is currently in preparation mode to prevent and contain the spread of COVID-19 should there be a confirmed case in the province. Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority, Ms Jane Holden said however that the hospital would attend to medical and surgical emergencies and trauma cases. She added that with trauma cases as a result of

tribal fighting, there is a fee of K300 that must be paid before a patient can be seen.

"Do not come to Mt Hagen Hospital with minor issues because we are in alert/preparation mode for COVID-19 patients. Your rural or urban health facility will assist you and if you come we will send you back there anyway.

"If you have been to your rural health facility and they have referred you to us then we will see you. We will continue to see medical and surgical emergencies and trauma cases," she said.

She added that since Monday this week, the hospital had been flooded with patients with minor illnesses, some of whom were from Southern Highlands who had bypassed the police roadblocks. This had taken up a lot of the clinicians' time and many had to be turned back.

"To avoid embarrassment, do not come to the hospital with a minor illness, go to your rural or urban health facility", she said.

WHPHA staff inducted into the public service

Staff of the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority are gradually being inducted into the National Public Service.

The latest group was inducted in mid-March where a total of 98 staff had received certificates after completing the week-long training which was conducted over two weeks due to the big number of inductees.

The induction helps the staff to have a better understanding of the National Public Service Code of Ethics and what they are required to do as servants of the public.

Those inducted included doctors, nurses, community health workers, health extension officers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, hygiene and general support staff who had served the WHPHA for periods ranging from one to five years.

A spokesperson for the employees, Dr Palo Haitawo of the Dental Clinic said many of the employees had spent a good number of years with the organisation but unfortunately they did not know much about the Public Service Code of Ethics and the General Orders.

He said as such they did not know much about their duties as public servants and the training had helped them to understand it better and thanked the management for giving them the opportunity to be trained.

"I thank the management for giving recognition to us and training us to know more about our roles and responsibilities and how effectively we can serve the public", Dr Haitawo said.

Acting Chief Executive Officer, Ms Jane Holden told the inductees that timeliness and punctuality were very important for public servants in order for them to discharge their duties effectively.

Ms Holden said they were public sector employees who were covered under the Public Service Management Act and as such they must be punctual and execute their duties in a timely manner.

She added that those who graduated were from different sections of the organisation but they all had one aim and that was to achieve the goals and objectives of the WHPHA which meant that they must work together as a team and not individually.

"You are not an island working in the health sector, you are public sector employees working as a team. It is a humbling and privileged position that you hold so do not take it for granted but serve the people you are paid to do", she said.



Photos: Top - The inductees are seated waiting to receive their certificates. Middle - Deputy Director Rural Nursing Services, Dannex Kupamu presenting an inductee with her certificate. Right - One of the inductees receiving his certificate from Acting CEO, Jane Holden. Far right - Acting Director Medical Services, Dr Jonah Kurubi presenting a certificate to another inductee as OIC Dental Clinic, Dr Palo Haitawo awaits his turn to receive his certificate.