

Hon. Boyce calls for healthy living in TCI

Minister of Health, the Hon. Dr. Lillian Boyce is making a strong appeal for the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands to live healthier lifestyles.

In her contribution to the budget debate, Hon. Boyce said that in addition to building the two new hospitals, she seriously believes that what is perhaps more central to the overall well-being of the Turks and Caicos Islands, is living healthy lifestyles.

She noted that the Medical Treatment Abroad Programme (TAP) continues to be the single largest health recurrent expenditure line item, with a total of \$20.9 million spent on medical services abroad during the last fiscal year.

Diseases such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension and cancer continue to be the main causes of referrals overseas, she said, adding that hypertension and diabetes are the main conditions responsible for the increase in the number of persons with stroke, chronic renal failure and heart attacks, all of which increased in 2006.

She said these chronic conditions were the main contributors to the increase in referrals abroad and the high expenditure on medical care overseas.

Hon. Boyce added: "Because of this, Mr. Speaker, greater attention must be paid to what we are doing in terms of primary health care. As a growing country, we cannot feel comfortable and satisfied knowing that year after year we are spending around \$20 Million sending people overseas for treatment of diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and high cholesterol or even all of the above."

She continued: "Therefore, if we can educate our people about living healthy lifestyles and if we can focus more on the primary aspect of our health care, it stands to reason that we will eventually spend less money sending people overseas for treatment for tertiary care treatment or attending to them when we build these two new hospitals.

And so, if we accept, as I do, that people are our greatest and most precious resource, we must spare no effort in ensuring that they live as healthy and as long as possible."

Hon. Boyce said government is committed to ensuring that all residents in the Turks and Caicos Islands have easy access to a high quality primary health care.

"We are committed to ensuring that all the community clinics in these islands are redeveloped and fully equipped so that their diagnostic and treatment capabilities are enhanced beyond what they are now," she said. "No longer will residents of South Caicos and North Caicos have to travel to Grand Turk or Providenciales to get an X-ray or have a minor procedure or blood test done. The South Caicos Health Centre has been completed and is in use and will be upgraded to a hospital. In this budget there are allocations for redevelopment of all the other clinics in North Caicos, Middle Caicos and

Salt Cay, while this government will budget next year to build a state of the art clinic in North Caicos.”