

PRESS RELEASE

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Virgin Islands Advances National Strategy to Eliminate Cervical Cancer

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The Ministry of Health and Social Development has commenced stakeholder consultations to develop a national roadmap for cervical cancer elimination.

The ministry has aligned with the World Health Organization (WHO) and Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Cervical Cancer Elimination Strategy and has met with representatives from these organisations, government agencies, private sector, civil society and healthcare professionals to support implementation of the current WHO and PAHO strategy and strengthen prevention, detection, and treatment.

Minister for Health and Social Development, Honourable Vincent O. Wheatley, said the initiative reflects Government's continued commitment to protecting the health and well-being of women throughout the Virgin Islands.

"Cervical cancer is one of those health challenges that demands both urgency and hope," Minister Wheatley said. He added, "It is a serious public health concern, but it is also one of the few cancers we have the tools to prevent. Through vaccination, screening, early detection, timely treatment and strong follow-up care, we can change outcomes for women and families across the Virgin Islands."

The minister also noted the Virgin Islands' progress through its HPV vaccination programme. This includes the transition to the WHO-recommended single-dose schedule, a catch-up campaign and HPV vaccination coverage above 90 percent for two consecutive years.

PAHO he said has recognised this as a regional success story and evidence of the Territory's ability to implement evidence-based public health programmes.

While celebrating this achievement, Minister Wheatley emphasised that vaccination alone is not enough.

"We must now strengthen HPV primary screening, diagnosis, treatment, referral systems, public education and equitable access to timely, high-quality care for women across the Territory," Minister Wheatley said.

Meanwhile, Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Ms. Tasha Bertie highlighted the importance of collaboration in shaping a strategy that responds to the needs of

women throughout the Territory.

Ms. Bertie said, "Today's consultation is about more than developing a strategy,. It is about bringing together the knowledge, experience and perspectives needed to strengthen disease prevention, improve access to services and enhance the quality of care provided to the women of the Virgin Islands."

The consultation marked an important milestone in the Territory's journey to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem. Building on its HPV vaccination success, the Virgin Islands will work with PAHO, healthcare providers, and community partners to implement a practical roadmap that strengthens prevention, early detection, treatment, and programme performance for women and girls throughout the Territory.

The Ministry thanks PAHO, healthcare professionals, stakeholders, and community partners for their continued support in advancing cervical cancer elimination in the Virgin Islands.

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