

**Remarks by Mr. Patrick Hylton
Group Managing Director
National Commercial Bank Jamaica Limited
Opening Address
The 18th International Diabetes Conference
The Sunset Jamaica Grande Resort, Ocho Rios, St. Ann
Thursday, March 29, 2012 – 11:15 am**

Theme: *New Frontiers in Diabetes Management*

Salutations:

- Our Chairman
- Professor, the Hon. Errol Morrison
- Sir Alister McIntyre
- Professor Brain Berman
- Distinguished Presenters
- Delegates
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen...

This year, as we celebrate the **50th Anniversary of our Independence**, it is fitting that the **University Diabetes Outreach Programme (UDOP)**, under the auspices of **The University of the West Indies, University of Technology** and the **Northern Caribbean University**, in collaboration with the **Diabetes Association of Jamaica**, have raised the bar to make the **18th International Diabetes Conference** one of the largest of its kind to be held in the Caribbean.

I, therefore, commend our academic institutions; the Diabetes Association of Jamaica; and the many corporate entities and foundations in the health sector, too numerous to name, who have invested in the staging of this worthy conference, for their dedication and commitment to the **field of diabetes**.

And, from our conference programme, it is clear that the synergies created have ensured that this event brought together **top quality local, regional, and international speakers**, so that the large contingent of medical professionals and other delegates gathered here today can truly benefit from their vast knowledge and valuable expertise.

This conference, under the theme, "***New Frontiers in Diabetes Management***," provides us with a unique and timely context in which we can seriously **examine the strides that we, in Jamaica, have made in the care and management of diabetes over the past fifty years;** and to determine the best directions going forward.

I am personally pleased to be associated with the conference; and my company, the **National Commercial Bank** (NCB), welcomes the opportunity to participate in expanding the body of technical research, new techniques and knowledge available to our medical practitioners in this area of diabetes management.

The **World Health Organisation** (WHO) defines "health" as being, "***a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.***" And, as simple as that may sound, we know that it takes more than "a village" for us to achieve good health.

Fortunately for us, under successive governments, this country has consistently moved to enhance its national health care system and the deliver vital services, with the support of international agencies, such as **WHO/PAHO**; the **United Nations Children's Fund**, UNICEF and others, who facilitate specific interventions; as well as, education and training.

And, at the core of our health service, we have dedicated professionals from Primary Health Care Specialist to Heart Surgeons...and other specialists...who deliver vital health interventions through the expanding network of regional and parish hospitals, clinics, private medical institutions and practices... that were developed prior to, and during our fifty years of independence.

We are fully aware that our health care system is not perfect; however, we are also cognizant of the fact that, **the life expectancy of people in our country, estimated at 73.24 years, is a direct indication of our health standards; and equals or surpasses that of many developed countries.** In fact, against the status of our economy, our country ranks very high in life expectancy.

As the presenters and participants at this conference are well aware ...millions of people around the world suffer from diabetes.... and, unfortunately the **incidences of diabetes continue to increase.** Figures from **WHO** indicate that "*the prevalence of diabetes for all age-groups worldwide was estimated to be 2.8% in Year 2000 and some 4.4% by Year 2030.*" Consequently, "*The total number of people with diabetes is projected to rise from 171 million in Year 2000 to 366 million in Year 2030.*"

Here in Jamaica, many studies and research have been carried out on the incidence of diabetes, for example the **Jamaica Health & Lifestyle Survey 2008**...led by **Professor Rainford Wilks of The UWI**, indicated that the prevalence of diabetes in **the Jamaican adult population between 15 and 74 is...approximately 7.9%.**

Naturally, the number of persons affected by diabetes and its impact on the workforce is of major concern, in terms of **national productivity** and the **achievement of our Vision 2030 development goals**.

And, **that is why a conference of this magnitude, which seeks to explore new frontiers for the management of diabetes, is essential.**

Just as it is in business planning, one must be in tune with their environment and be able to read and respond to the signals; and for quite some time the studies have revealed that the Pan American health region is a serious target for obesity and diabetes. This International Conference is enabling us to put action in place to not only manage, but ideally to stem this worrying trend.

From an awareness perspective, not only in respect of diabetes, I can attest to the fact that corporate Jamaica is beginning to understand the importance of maintaining good health and wellness practices at the workplace. Management is now linking the wellness of employees to the quality and level of their performance; and, as a result, many companies are actively pursuing initiatives that have moved beyond “**health insurance**” and appropriate “**sick leave,**” regulations, to **adopting beneficial health and wellness strategies.**

We, at the **National Commercial Bank** (NCB) firmly believe that all employees should enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; that primary prevention of health problems should be given priority; and the workplace should serve as a setting for public health promotions and interventions. In addition, activities related to employee’s health should be planned, promoted and implemented with a view to reducing health risks among employees. Our employees are considered our prime assets.

Since 2007, NCB has built a **formidable alliance with the Ministry of Health**, and other health care practitioners to provide added benefits to our employees.

- We have a policy in respect of **HIV/AIDS**...
- We have a **Communicable Disease Policy**...
- We have an **Occupational Safety and Health Policy**...

At the same time, we encourage our employees to be screened for breast cancer; to check their Cholesterol levels; to have their sight and hearing tested; and do regular checks for their blood pressure, diabetes, and so on.

Our **Wellness & Recreation Centre** is charged with designing and implementing wellness and recreational activities for all employees to ensure that there is a balance between work and personal pursuits. And, in each Unit, there is a **Wellness Officer**, who is trained in basic first aid skills to assist other employees.

I am also proud to note that our **company has been the recipient of two awards**, in respect of employee wellness initiatives. We received:

- The **Bronze Award** for the Voluntary Compliance Programme of the **Occupational Safety and Health Department** of the **Ministry of Labour**.
- And, the Gold Award, from that same Department of the Ministry of Labour, for **HIV & AIDS Voluntary Compliance**.

We will continue to improve our internal wellness programmes, to **ensure that our employees are in the best of health**; and can carry out their duties to the best of their ability. In addition, we will continue to **support health communication and development** in the wider society.

On behalf of the National Commercial Bank, I extend our **sincere congratulations to the two dedicated experts who are being awarded during this conference:**

- **Mr. Brian M. Berman**, Professor of Family and Community Medicine, from the University of Maryland School of Medicine, USA, who is the **Sir Alister McIntyre Distinguished Awardee**.
- And, our own **Dr. Henry I.C. Lowe**, a Jamaican Scientist, who specializes in medical chemistry; and has contributed more than forty years in the field of science and technology, who is the **Sir Phillip Sherlock Awardee**.

We applaud these gentlemen for their selfless contributions to the health sector; and look forward to their presentations during the conference. Ladies and gentlemen, during this four-day period we will be exposed to presentations from **more than 40 presenters**; many clinical sessions; and a major exhibition; as well as, a video link with **the Caribbean Endocrine Society's Satellite Symposium**, on "***Endocrinology and Ageing***."

Our presenters will highlight many aspects of diabetes....from susceptibility to treatment and management...highlighting varying approaches and techniques. And, we welcome the opportunity to learn more.

In closing, it is my hope that all of these activities will not only energise us; but, also point us in the right direction; as we move on ***to establish new frontiers in the management of diabetes in Jamaica***.

I thank you.

***Mr. Patrick Hylton
Group Managing Director
National Commercial Bank Jamaica Limited
March 29, 2012***