

In support of Caribbean health workers and research

Loren De Freitas, Damion Basdeo, Seetharaman Hariharan,

On behalf of the Caribbean Medical Journal Editorial Team

Correspondence to:

Dr. Loren De Freitas
Deputy Editor
Caribbean Medical Journal
Email: cmj.ttma@gmail.com

DOI: [10.48107/CMJ.2021.06.001](https://doi.org/10.48107/CMJ.2021.06.001)

Copyright: This is an open-access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) which permits use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

©2021 The Authors. Caribbean Medical Journal published by Trinidad & Tobago Medical Association

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the monumental role that health workers play in managing the health systems globally. The World Health Organization (WHO) has designated 2021 as the International Year of the Health and Care Workers¹. Health workers across the globe have dedicated their lives to working during this COVID-19 pandemic and many have died while performing their duties. In the Caribbean, our health workers are faced with a daunting task ahead. Like many other developing countries, several of the Caribbean nations have been affected by an overwhelming increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in the recent past, as well during the current period. Simultaneously, vaccination programmes are ongoing across the region and health workers are also at the fore-front of these initiatives.

After 15 months into this pandemic, health workers in the region are experiencing high levels of burnout and low levels of optimal wellbeing. It is appropriate that the WHO has launched the year of the health worker campaign, focusing on the theme of protecting and investing in health workers. While health workers are owed unwavering support and gratitude for their supererogatory sacrifices, at the least, it is absolutely important that their basic needs are met at the ground level. Nations should invest financially for their wellbeing, ensuring fair salaries, proper employment, training and education. It is also essential to implement mentorship programmes and promote gender equity. Health workers should also be protected by providing them with safe, clean and congenial working environments and access to wellbeing services. Without these actions, words of thanks alone may fall short.

The pandemic has also accelerated research activity across the globe. There is an imminent need to focus on strengthening our health research systems and integrating research networks in the region. Our health systems and health workers require evidence-based measures to assist in their management, interventions tailored to the local context, and thus improve healthcare organisations. This can be achieved only through well-conducted research. It is imperative though, that such research be conducted with not only sound methodology but also with integrity, adhering to ethical principles and ensuring transparency of all processes. As COVID-19 is

still an evolving and dynamic pandemic, we must also accept that evidence changes rapidly. We must be willing to acknowledge and admit this and move forward.

The Caribbean Medical Journal acts as an avenue to produce credible and essential regional research. Our culture and society are unique, hence variations in findings are expected in comparison to the published research from other parts of the world. We encourage and support the medical community to utilise CMJ in producing effective and substantial regional research. This will be essential in fighting this COVID-19 pandemic and strengthening regional medical fraternity as well as their practices. Let us continue to be instrumental in orchestrating the containment of this pandemic regionally and by extension internationally.

Reference

World Health Organization (WHO). (Nov 2020). 2021 designated as the International Year of Health and Care Workers. <https://www.who.int/news/item/11-11-2020-2021-designated-as-the-international-year-of-health-and-care-workers>