

President of the Heart & Stroke Foundation, Humphrey Metzgen, (left) shares a joke with CEO of the Foundation, Gina Pitts, Minister of Health, John Boyce and Governor General, Sir Elliott Belgrave.



Heart and stroke disease number one killer

Heart and Stroke disease is forecast to cause three times more death and disability than all the infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS over the next 20 years in the Caribbean.

And heart disease is no longer a male prerogative. President of the Heart & Stroke Foundation, Humphrey Metzgen, made these disclosures recently while speaking at a ceremony which marked the renaming of the headquarters as The Hassell & Symmonds Cardiac Care Centre.

"It has become the number one killer in the population. Among women, the mortality is one in three female deaths in the world. This is about one death per minute. It is more than the total number of women who die from cancers, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and malaria combined. Heart disease is no longer a male prerogative. In fact, this disease has spread to unborn children during the mother's

pregnancy and young people who are exposed to unhealthy diets, lack of exercise and smoking. The story among stroke patients is equally distressing: one person dies in Barbados from a stroke every day. Inadequate facilities also add to these difficulties. It takes just four to six minutes after a cardiac arrest before a person experiences brain death and then complete death. The survival rate outside a hospital is less than one to two per cent with no cardiopulmonary resuscitation or early access to a defibrillator.

"I say to you these metrics are horrifying; we clearly need to find a better solution if we are to improve the well-being and quality of life of all Barbadians. The refurbishment of our headquarters with the installation of the latest equipment and staffed with the very best health care and fitness practitioners is therefore an important first step in achieving these objectives and allows for access to a comprehensive health screening programme without the need for a referral," Metzgen

added. He pointed out that in the coming months the foundation will be extending the gym offerings to cope with evening demands as well to provide a number of different educational facilities.

The president disclosed that the single new contribution the building will offer is the accommodation for the organisation's pilot National Cardio-vascular Screening Programme.

"So far this has attracted a number of patients and support from corporate Barbados. One of Barbados' leading insurance companies, ICBL, has recently put entire 250 staff and senior management through this programme. The Central Bank of Barbados is due to follow later this year. Many others are beginning to recognise the many benefits of early prevention," the President said. (NC)