



Dr. Christopher Tufton, Minister of Health and Wellness Offers Lessons Learnt from Crisis Management at COHS Seminar



Dr. the Honourable Christopher Tufton (left), Minister of Health and Wellness (MOHW), fields questions from the audience at the fifth Health and Wellness Seminar hosted by the College of Health Sciences at the UTech, Jamaica Papine Campus on World Health Day, April 7, 2022, under the theme "Health and Wellness During a Pandemic". Professor Fitzroy Henry, (seated, head table) Professor of Public Health Nutrition, COHS, who moderated the seminar, looks on.

Dr. the Honourable Christopher Tufton, Minister of Health and Wellness, delivered a special presentation on *"Lessons Learnt from Crisis Leadership"* at the fifth in the series of Health and Wellness seminars hosted by the College of Health Sciences (COHS), University of Technology, Jamaica. The hybrid seminar which was hosted both virtually and at the Shared Facilities Building, UTech, Jamaica Papine Campus, took place on World Health Day, April 7, 2022, under the theme *"Health and Wellness During a Pandemic"*.

The webinar, moderated by Professor Fitzroy Henry, Professor of Public Health Nutrition, COHS, was the latest in a series of presentations hosted by Dean of the College, Dr. Adella Campbell, to explore health and wellness issues brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Professor Colin Gyles, Acting President, in his welcome, noted that through seminars and presentations such as these, the University is underscoring its commitment to "furthering research, contributing to innovation and providing support in policy making and establishing best practice guidelines as the health sciences and health emergencies evolve."

Ms. Marion Brown, Vice President and University Registrar, in her greetings to participants drawn from the medical fraternity and academia, lauded the timeliness of the seminar, noting that UTech, Jamaica in navigating the challenges of the pandemic has also taken advantage of lessons learnt, through adopting to the necessary protocols and establishing a steering committee, to assure that we were sensitive and responsive as the circumstances of the pandemic as it unfolded.

Dr. the Honourable Christopher Tufton, Minister of Health and Wellness, throughout his presentation, on *"Lessons Learnt from Crisis Leadership,"* drew on his own experiences to illustrate examples of the leadership approach taken during health crises of the past two years. He utilized the Cornwall Regional Hospital collapse and the COVID-19 pandemic as case studies of crises that he noted, required swift, decisive and pragmatic leadership responses.

The Minister outlined the features of a crisis environment, which he pointed out, include chaos, panic, low public trust and public pressure, resource limitations, misinformation, and limited organisational capacity. Dr. Tufton underscored the importance of open communication and engagement with those directly affected, and continuous dialogue with the wider society, as critical steps in the leadership, particularly in a tumultuous environment. He noted, however, that "you have to be careful what you communicate and how you communicate," expressing that mobilization, with measured responses utilizing necessary adjustments, are key to the process of executing good leadership.

Dr. Tufton further shared practical examples of leadership response, particularly with reference to the Cornwall Regional Hospital Collapse where he

highlighted that an immediate technical assessment to determine the source of the collapse and the outsourcing of critical services was undertaken to manage the effects of the disaster. He also noted that multilateral, internal and external consultations were conducted, and a comprehensive technical assessment completed.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Tufton outlined that effective strategies included twice weekly media briefs, field operations, a comprehensive, wide-reaching vaccination programme and official hospital visits in ongoing efforts to contain, control and manage infections of the virus. He also noted that the response to the virus included a pre-planning and education campaign, a strategy for delaying the virus entry, hospital preparation, contact tracing, testing, quarantine, vaccination and the development of protocols for managing the virus once it was detected in the Jamaican population.

Minister Tufton also shared lessons on the importance of managing public expectations, the need to lead by example and the need to build confidence. He cautioned however, against “overconfidence”, advising: “don't ever feel that you have all the solutions,” adding that “solutions cannot be fixed in your mind, they have to evolve as evidence is presented.” Dr. Tufton also encouraged future and present leaders to seek out the opportunities in every crisis. “The objective is not just to solve the problem, as big as an objective as that is,” he noted, “the objective at some point is to learn from the experience, and to use those lessons to minimize the repeat of a crisis.”

In Recognition of CSON's Support to the Ministry of Health and Wellness



Dr. the Honourable Christopher Tufton, Minister of Health and Wellness (MOHW), took the opportunity to present an award to the University's Caribbean School of Nursing (CSON), honouring the School's "dedicated service to the Ministry's Nursing and Midwifery Service Unit during the pandemic." Mrs. Anthonette Patterson-Bartley, Acting Head, CSON was on hand to accept the award.

**Corporate Communications Unit
Advancement Division
University of Technology, Jamaica**

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