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NHI MEDICAL DIRECTOR TALKS SELF-CARE POST IRMA

Dr. Harlan Vanterpool gives stress management tips

Road Town, Tortola, October 25, 2017– Medical Director for the National Health Insurance (NHI) of the Virgin Islands, Dr. Harlan Vanterpool, is encouraging persons to exercise self-care to cope with stress resulting from the devastation left behind by Hurricane Irma.

Dr. Vanterpool said, “The British Virgin Islands has recently experienced in the passage of Hurricane Irma; probably the most traumatic event in its history. The devastating effects of Irma are widespread and far reaching. It has and will continue to affect us all in some way, for the rest of our lives. And it’s because of this far reaching effect that we should take time for ourselves to reflect on how we are being affected on a personal basis.”

He continued, “After Hurricane Irma, some persons may be experiencing nightmares and reoccurring thoughts, while others may be easily irritated or angered. Difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite or overeating, sadness, feeling powerless, shock, fear, anxiety about the future, even disorientation or difficulty making decisions, or concentrating are all normal reactions. So let’s not be too hard on ourselves or others at this time.”

Dr. Vanterpool said that not dealing with the stress can be harmful to both mental and physical health and urged persons to take care of themselves.

He said, “Self-care should be at the top of everyone’s priority list. Yes, it’s okay to put yourself first because you won’t be able to properly care for someone else if you are not well.”

The medical director also expressed concern for those persons who were managing conditions prior to Hurricane Irma, stating, “More often than not, persons put disaster recovery at the forefront and their ailments lose priority. This is a recipe for another disaster. If you have medicine to take by a certain time, or a doctor’s appointment, try your best to be on time. You’ll be no use to yourself or others if you get sick.”

How to cope? Dr. Vanterpool said, “Rest, exercise and good nutrition are great examples of self-care. Those few things are the foundation for good physical and mental health.”

He continued, “Persons should also talk about it. Sharing your story can be therapeutic. Spending time with friends and family helps to get your mind off of things and nothing beats being surrounded by supporting and loving people.”

Dr. Vanterpool also said that giving back to the community also has a positive effect on mental health and encouraged persons to pursue any charitable opportunities now available.

The medical director also encourages any persons who need help coping with stress, to visit an NHI-approved provider with trained mental health professionals.

The National Health Insurance (NHI) of the Virgin Islands is designed to provide all legal residents of the Virgin Islands with affordable access to the health services they need.

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Notes to Editor(s): Photograph of Dr. Vanterpool is attached.