

Public-health sector to receive cancer-treatment equipment

Health Minister Dr Fenton Ferguson, says that discussions are advanced with a leading Canadian hospital for the acquisition of equipment to improve cancer treatment in the public-health sector.

He said that during a recent visit to Canada, he was able to make "significant progress" with the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre for the supply of two Linear Accelerator machines, which are used for radiotherapy treatment. "We are closer to achieving our objective of getting two Linear Accelerator machines. As it is now, we only have one in the private sector, and we are moving to have two in the public sector," the Minister said. He stated that the acquisition of the machines "will take a tremendous burden off our cancer patients". Dr Ferguson stressed that the Government is committed to reducing the cost of cancer treatment and care. "Cancer care remains a burden for individuals and families, and part of my mandate is to work to get cancer care down to a certain manageable level. There is a particular drug that is going at over \$200,000 per dose, and for persons with breast cancer, you need 18 doses. We must find a way to get those prices down," he stated. Lifestyle choices The minister said that even as he works on improving care, he also has to encourage Jamaicans to adopt healthier lifestyle choices to reduce cancers and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs). "This is why I have been so steadfast in my arguments against smoking in specified public places. We are facing a debilitating problem where NCDs are concerned. High blood pressure, diabetics, cancer, respiratory diseases; these NCDs are responsible for over 70 per cent of deaths in Jamaica," he stated. "Tobacco exposure is the most serious factor for the NCDs. The ban on smoking in specified public places will essentially lead to improvement in the quality of air we breathe, and overtime, reduce the prevalence of NCDs, including respiratory illnesses and heart disease," he pointed out.