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NHF provides \$51.8 million in drug subsidy for epileptics

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The National Health Fund (NHF) provided \$51.8 million in medication subsidy for persons with epilepsy during the period April 2014 to January 2015.

There were 45,122 claims over the nine-month period and 6,195 claimants.

NHF Chief Executive Officer, Everton Anderson, informed that the fund enrolls about 1, 200 persons with epilepsy each year and the number stood at 13,059 as at January 31, 2015. "This is... about one per cent of the total enrolment for the NHF card... (out of a total of) 377,000 persons," he informed.

He said beneficiaries enrolled for epilepsy during the last financial year, filled nearly 49,000 prescription items and received a subsidy of \$56 million, which accounted for two per cent of the total subsidy paid out over the period.

Mr. Anderson was addressing a function held yesterday (Feb. 9), at the Jamaica Library Service's (JLS) Tom Redcam Drive headquarters in Kingston, where 500 children's books on epilepsy were handed over to the JLF.

The NHF provided \$360,000 for the purchase of the books, which will be distributed through the JLS' islandwide library network.

Entitled 'Way to Go, Flash', the publications are intended to raise awareness of epilepsy and help to lower the stigma against children and adults with the condition. Epilepsy is one of 15 chronic health conditions covered by the NHF.

Mr. Anderson said the hope is to help change attitudes towards persons living with epilepsy.

"There are several myths associated with epilepsy that we ought to dispel and some cultural practices in caring for epileptics which... do more harm than good," he noted.

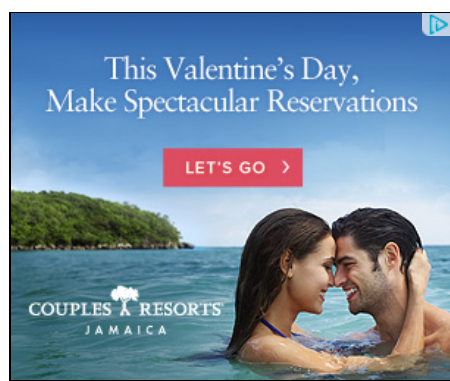
Executive Director of the Jamaican Epilepsy Association, Joy McHugh, welcomed the donation of the books, noting that it is a "starting point" for a public education campaign that will focus on increasing awareness and recognition of epilepsy, and training in administering first aid to persons with the condition.

The presentation of the books was held to mark the first global International Epilepsy Day, which is an observance of the International Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE) and the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE).


The JLS network is comprised of 121 libraries islandwide, providing service to 922 schools. Each library will have one copy of the book for lending purposes.

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