



FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Polly DLG. Masga was appointed to the CHCC Board of Trustees in August 2018 and in November 2018 was sworn in. She is currently the General Manager for Marianas Medical Center & Pacific Laboratories, a private family practice clinic that has been operating on Saipan for over 20 years. She has an Associates degree in Business, as well as a Bachelor's degree in Business Management, both obtained from the Northern Marianas College.



Ms. Masga brings to the board her experience managing a healthcare clinic and her many years of experience as a Human Resources (HR) professional, working in both the CNMI government and private sector. In addition to being a Trustee for the CHCC, she also serves on the CNMI Area Health Education Council, State Workforce Development Board, and the Northern Marianas Humanities Council.

Ms. Masga anticipates working with the hospital's staff and management to help CHCC continue their services and work towards having better accessibility to care for everyone on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

"I am motivated in my role as a Trustee because I see a lot of potential to continuously improve the services we already have at CHCC. I hope to have CHCC flourish in providing good, quality health care for our entire CNMI community."

DID YOU KNOW?

The idea that vaccines cause autism or any other disability is a myth! It has no basis in fact! The original study that showed a link between vaccines and autism was done in the 1990s and took data from only 12 children. Follow up studies of hundreds of thousands of children have shown no link between vaccines and autism, and the man who published the study, Andrew Wakefield, later lost his medical license because it was found that he had distorted the data and acted unethically when doing the study.

OPIOID ABUSE IN THE CNMI

The opioid epidemic in the United States has become a national crisis, with over 130 people dying every single day from overdose deaths. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, "The misuse of and addiction to opioids - including prescription pain relievers, heroin, and synthetic opioids such as fentanyl - is a serious national crisis that affects public health as well as social and economic welfare."

So how did this all happen? In the 1990s, pharmaceutical companies downplayed the addictive qualities of prescription painkillers, encouraging doctors to prescribe them for all different types of pain. This led to these painkillers, such as OxyContin and Vicodin, being prescribed to patients at greater rates than before, which led to widespread misuse and abuse before it became widely known just how addictive these medications can be.

Luckily, based on CHCC surveillance of prescriptions and prescribing practices, there is no indication that we have a serious problem yet in the CNMI. Drug overdose deaths are extremely rare in the CNMI. Because we are aware of the problems in the mainland, and of the incredibly addictive quality of these medications, the CHCC is able to monitor the situation and implement alternate strategies for

managing both chronic and acute pain.

One such strategy is holding trainings on alternate pain management methods, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). The Community Guidance Center held a CBT training this past March with experts from the Opioid State Targeted Technical Assistance effort. Participants included doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and behavioral health workers.

The CHCC will also soon be integrating into Guam's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP). Most U.S. states have implemented PDMPs to effectively monitor all controlled substances dispensed within the state. The CNMI has yet to establish a PDMP, but with fewer than 55,000 people, building the infrastructure necessary to build a new PDMP for this small population would not be cost effective. However, the CNMI's closest neighbor, Guam, has operated a PDMP for several years. This shared program structure is anticipated to be far more cost effective than each territory establishing independent programs for relatively small populations. Furthermore, with resident travel being common between the two islands, using a shared system will create a more complete record of controlled substance prescribing and dispensing.

This does not mean that members of the community should not be vigilant. If you have been prescribed an opioid pain medication by your doctor, and are worried that you may be developing an addiction, contact the Community Guidance Center at (670)323-6560/1 or cgc.recoveryclinic@gmail.com. Family members living with individuals who take this type of painkiller can also contact the CGC if they would like more information.

Although opioids are an effective method for alleviating pain, it is in your best interest to consult with your primary care provider about an alternative strategy, especially for long-term pain management, to help prevent misuse and addiction.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH MONTH

May 4th, 6-10pm: Family Movie Night

There will be activities starting at 6pm; the movie will begin at 7pm. The venue is still to be determined, and there will be free snacks!

May 7th and May 21st, 7am: Health Talk-Radio Show on KKMP

Promoting preventative health services and how residents can access them.

May 8th and May 9th, 5-6:30pm: Healthy Cooking Demo

Demonstrating how heart-healthy cooking can be simple, tasty, and low-cost. Demonstrations will be held at Blue Sky Supermarket in San Antonio on May 8th and Twins Supermarket in Dan Dan on May 9th.

May 18th, 5:30-10am: 5 for 5k Walk, Run, and Roll

The CNMI Catholic Diocese of Chalan Kanoa is partnering with the CHCC for this event. Registration will be held in the Kristo Rai Parish parking lot with health screenings available and a Zumba demo to get everyone warmed up!

May 25th, 10am-2pm: Systems of Care Family Expo

This event will be held at the Carolinian Affairs Office with the goal of promoting children's mental health. There will be educational materials and presenters, games, and Public Health activities for mothers and families to participate in.

For more information about Women's Health Month events, contact the Maternal and Child Health Bureau at (670)664-8701 or mchbcnmi@gmail.com. Follow them on Facebook @mchbcnmi and on Instagram @mchbcnmi

REVAMPING THE BIBA HEALTHY RESTAURANT PROGRAM

The CNMI Nutrition Council, in partnership with the CHCC, is reviving the Biba Healthy Restaurant Program to encourage local restaurants to offer fresh, clearly-marked, healthy menu options. Through this effort, we hope to make the healthy choice the easy choice for CNMI restaurant patrons. In return for participation, restaurants receive free Biba marketing materials, publicity, and advertising through project outreach efforts.



The Biba Healthy Restaurant Program strives to ensure access to healthy food and beverage choices from CNMI restaurants and caterers. The program's nutrition guidelines for restaurants and caterers were developed to ensure healthy choices are available for CNMI families when eating outside the home. Menu items with the Biba logo are only approved after a thorough review by a CNMI registered dietitian to ensure that the nutritional requirements are met. Patrons can rest assured that menu items marked with the Biba logo are truly a balanced, nutritious option.

The Biba Program is based on the following food principles:

- Include more fruit and vegetables, whole grains, and high-fiber foods.
- Encourage the use of locally-grown or produced foods.
- Emphasize whole and fresh ingredients, prepared with less sodium and sugar, and fewer processed and pre-packaged items.
- Prepare foods with healthy fats, less saturated fat, and no trans fats.
- Use lean sources of protein.
- Provide healthy portion sizes (small to moderate).

Check out the healthy menu options at our current Biba restaurants! Everest Kitchen in Garapan, Caravan in Garapan, and Shirley's Coffee Shop, with locations in Garapan and Susupe.

COMING SOON: Inas' Kitchen!

Restaurant patrons should look for the logo to identify program-approved menu options. If your favorite restaurant isn't participating, encourage the restaurant manager to email bibamenu@gmail.com



To learn more about becoming a Biba restaurant, or for more information about the program, check out <https://bibamenu.wixsite.com/website>

Follow the Biba program on Instagram @bibacnmi

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FCC Continues Extended Hours

The Family Care Clinic has just finished its second month of being open for extended hours and on weekends. Both staff and patients have been pleased with the change and the increased accessibility to care without a conflict with work or school.

The FCC is currently open Monday through Friday from 7am to 5pm, with no closure during lunch hours. On Saturdays, the FCC is open by appointment only from 8am to 5pm.

Call the FCC at (670)234-8950 extension 3312 to schedule your appointment.

CHCC Outpatient Pharmacy Vaccinations

The CHCC Outpatient Pharmacy continues to offer adult vaccinations during regular business hours: Monday through Friday from 8am to 6pm, and weekends and holidays from 8am to 5pm. No appointment necessary.

For more information about this program, call the CHCC Outpatient Pharmacy at (670)236-8798.

For children's vaccines, or for more information about vaccines, call the Immunization Clinic at (670)236-8745.

In-Home Crisis Counseling Available

The You Us Together United (YUTU) Crisis Counseling Program is available to anyone who may be struggling mentally or emotionally. The YUTU CCP is a community support system promoting resilience, empowerment, and recovery. Program staff make house visits in villages on Saipan and Tinian to provide emotional support, teach coping skills, and provide referrals as needed.

The program can be reached Monday through Friday from 7:30am to 4:30pm.

- Saipan: (670)286-0227
- Tinian: (670)286-027
- Email: ccpyutu@gmail.com

Incoming Public Health Interns for CHCC

This summer the CHCC will host two public health interns from the University of California, Berkeley. They will be arriving in June and working with several CHCC programs through August on data analytics and program improvement.

CHCC TO IMPLEMENT NATIONAL ELECTRONIC DISEASE SURVEILLANCE REPORTING

The CHCC Epidemiology & Laboratory Capacity Program (ELC) is working with the CHCC's Health Information Technology (HIT) department to implement participation in the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS), making the CNMI the second of the United States Pacific Island Jurisdictions to do so. This system was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Center (CDC) to improve public health monitoring of contagious diseases. It is a complex reporting system that will allow standardized disease surveillance information to be uploaded into a federal database, making it easier to analyze trends, monitor and mitigate disease outbreaks, and compare CNMI data to national data. This marks just one of several recent and ongoing CHCC efforts to increase the scope and effectiveness of electronic health data collection.

Benefits of NEDSS data reporting:

- Significant improvements in public health identification, response, and mitigation of disease outbreaks.
- Increased efficiency in Electronic Health Record (EHR) information sharing and clinical reporting outcomes.
- Improvements in availability of public health disease data and the inclusion of CNMI data in national reports.
- Improved capacity of public health surveillance staff in managing information, allowing more time for investigation and prevention activities.
- Improved communication among public health staff, clinicians, and the public information officer in order to increase public awareness.
- Standardized data from NEDSS will be able to inform public health activities, identify disparities, and evaluate the effectiveness of public health programs.

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Questions about the newsletter? Please call (670)234-8950 extension 3359 or email communications@chcc.gov.mp