

PRESS RELEASE



Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“WHO Regional Director Visits CNMI”

World Health Organization (WHO) Western Pacific Regional Director Dr. Takeshi Kasai, along with Mr. Jeff Kobza, the Director of Administration and Finance for the WHO Western Pacific Region, visited the CNMI from November 1-2, 2019, at the invitation of Governor Ralph Torres and Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) CEO Esther Muna. The visit was an opportunity to discuss the CNMI’s population health priorities and challenges, and how they align with WHO’s vision for the Region.

The Regional Director’s visit began with the kickoff of the CNMI’s Emergency Medical Team (EMT) training, which represents an important step in bolstering emergency preparedness and response capabilities through a multi-agency partnership. The EMT, when fully internationally accredited, will be able to deploy to neighboring jurisdictions during natural disasters, outbreaks, or other emergencies. As a Type 1 EMT, the CNMI’s team will have the capacity to set up a small outpatient field clinic capable of handling approximately 100 patients per day, similar to the satellite clinics that were set up in San Antonio and Dan Dan after Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018.



Image caption: Dr. Kasai and Mr. Kobza helped to kick off the CNMI’s first Emergency Medical Team training. Nov 1, 2019.



The visit also included a tour of the CHCC main campus on Saipan, where Dr. Kasai sat down with CHCC leadership to discuss the strategic vision of the WHO in the Western Pacific Region, and how it aligns with the CHCC's initiatives and challenges. The WHO Western Pacific Region vision paper sets out key areas of focus for the next five years: health security, including antimicrobial resistance; non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and ageing; climate change and the environment, and reaching the unreached.

The Regional Director also took time to visit the CNMI Museum and some of the World War 2 memorials on Saipan, including Suicide and Bonzai Cliff. At American Memorial Park Dr. Kasai laid a wreath of flowers in honor of the soldiers who fell during the Battle of Saipan in 1944.



On the evening of November 1, the Governor hosted a cultural dinner at Fiesta Resort and Spa for Dr. Kasai and Mr. Kozba. During his remarks at the dinner, Dr. Kasai spoke again on the importance of recognizing that while the countries and territories in the Western Pacific share common goals and face similar challenges, each jurisdiction is different, and has different priorities.

On November 2, the Regional Director flew to Tinian for a tour the Tinian Health Center (THC). The visit to Tinian also included a tour of the Tinian Northfield and the famous House of Taga archeological site. Dr. Kasai commented on the efficacy of the THC, noting the availability of services for such a small and remote population. In general, the CHCC's integrated health system, encompassing not only a hospital and outpatient clinics, but also population, behavioral, and environmental health services, was well received by the Regional Director for its efficiency in providing comprehensive care to the people of the CNMI.

This visit comes a little less than a month after CHCC CEO Muna attended the seventieth session of the WHO Western Pacific Regional Committee in Manila, Philippines, from October 7-11, 2019, to represent the US territories in the Pacific through a non-voting seat. This session was the first time that the US Pacific island territories - CNMI, American Samoa, and Guam - were represented independently from the US as a whole, and allowed Muna to address issues that are of specific concern to the islands. Muna spoke to the



committee on the effects of communicable disease outbreaks in the region, climate change, antimicrobial resistance intervention efforts, non-communicable diseases prevention, the ageing population, and emergency preparedness.

The CHCC looks forward to continued collaboration with the WHO in the Western Pacific Region, as we work to improve the health of the CNMI – and to using the united voice of the US Pacific island territories to effectively communicate and collaborate on health challenges throughout the region.

For more information about CHCC programs, please follow us on Facebook and Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.



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