

PAHO Director urges Caribbean to Prepare for Early Detection of Coronavirus



Pan American Health Organization

The Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) is urging countries in the Americas, including those in the Caribbean, to be prepared to detect early, isolate and care for patients infected with the new coronavirus.

PAHO director Dr Carissa Etienne said that was necessary in the event of receiving travelers from countries where there is ongoing transmission of novel coronavirus cases.

“Health services need to be prepared, because they will most likely be the entry point where cases of the new coronavirus will be detected, as has already happened with previous epidemics,” Dr Etienne said at a PAHO briefing over the weekend.

The Dominican-born PAHO official said the UN agency stands ready to support the Americas because detecting cases early can prevent the spread of the disease.

Etienne said PAHO has activated its incident management system, stating that, since the beginning of January, it has shared information with ministries of health through the International Health Regulations channel and through its country representatives.

She said PAHO will continue to update information on what countries can do to effectively respond to this new virus, about which there is still uncertainty.

Earlier this month, the World Health Organization Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus convened the Emergency Committee to advise on whether the outbreak in China constitutes a public health emergency of international concern.

Ghebreyesus decided not to declare a public health emergency at this time, according to PAHO, but stressed it is an emergency in China, and that the outbreak poses a high risk at the regional and global levels.

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