

Minister Tufton Directly Engages Online Community through #JaTalksHealth





The first live Twitter discussion by the Ministry of Health was held last evening by Dr. Chris Tufton. Twitter users were given the opportunity to pose questions to the minister and officials on his team using the hashtag #JaTalksHealth. The one hour discussion held at the Ministry of Health in New Kingston was attended by Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Winston De La Haye, Dr. Kevin Harvey, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health, Dr. Melody Ennis, Director Emergency, Disaster Management and Special Services and Dr. Lundie Richards, Director of Health Plan Service and Integration.

Twitter users engaged the Minister and his team of 'technocrats' in a series of questions to which they responded to in real time. Online participants in the discussion included Medical Sciences students at the UWI, Mona; Charitable Foundations such as [Do Good Jamaica](#); Educator and social commentators; Marketing Executives and other individuals with special interests in public health and education. Some of the questions posed were:

Gibbie (@GibbieGibbz): Since last question was difficult, and easier one. Are Zik-V flu shots available to high risk groups? where? The Minister responded by stating that "ZikV and flu are completely different. No vaccines exists for ZikV. Control mosquito breeding sites."

UWI Final Year Law Student, Markel Abe Oneil (@GovernorVirgo) tweeted: @christufton What is the Ministry doing to invest in primary health care, in order to take some pressure off hospitals? #JaTalksHealth to which the Minister responded "there is a programme being developed to upgrade health centers."

IG:kimmibooboxoxo (@kimmibooboxoxo) tweeted: @christufton Also the service most times at KPH is horrible! The staff needs some serious brushing up! The Minister responded by saying "We continue to strive to do better #JaTalksHealth Customer service training ongoing."

Shereen Dawkins Cox (@jreen21) tweeted: MOH ensure doctors affix their full and registration numbers on prescriptions rather than an unidentifiable signature. #JaTalksHealth

While other Twitter users tweeted questions for immediate response, one user wanted to have a one on one with the Minister. Entrepreneur, Theodore Whyte (@ovotheo) tweeted: #JaTalksHealth @christufton I have ideas, possible solutions to some current issues. If you are willing to listen then lets talk.

Twitter users who participated in yesterday's discussion also gave commendations to the Minister for taking this initiative and engaging them in an online discussion.

Durie Dee (@MizDurie) tweeted: #JaTalksHealth So far seems to like a good idea. Responses are quick and relevant.

Consultant and Huffington Post Blogger, Anne Thornley-Brown (@athornleybrown) tweeted: @christufton Thank you for proactively taking the time out to reach out, find out our concerns, and answer questions.

The Minister also used Periscope to connect with his audience. Periscope is a live video streaming app. The Minister plans to make this live Twitter discussion a frequent one. Last evening's discussion may just be one in a series of Twitter discussions to be held by the Minister of Health.

ABOUT THE DESK AT 13 WEST

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