

**ASTHO Peer-to-Peer Fellowship Program
Environmental Public Health Tracking
Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands**



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BACKGROUND

The Commonwealth Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) is a US Commonwealth in the western Pacific Ocean and is located approximately 3,800 miles southwest of Hawaii, 130 miles north of Guam and within the Micronesian region which includes, the Federated States of Micronesia (Pohnpei, Kosrae and Yap), Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau. The current situation of Zika virus and other arboviral diseases (CHIKV and Dengue) makes the CNMI prone to all occurring events in regards to arboviral diseases. Because of the close proximity of our location and the travel influx of people coming to the CNMI from these islands and other Pacific regions including the Philippines, Korea, and Japan, make the CNMI population susceptible and vulnerable for transmittal of these diseases.

Based on the 2010 US Census, the total population of the CNMI was more than 53,000 people, and climbing. A significant number of CNMI's population are from foreign countries, primarily as guest workers from the Philippines.

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) was signed into law on January 15, 2009. It was created by Public Law 16-51 as passed by the House of Representatives, Sixteenth Northern Marianas Legislature as its First Regular Session. The Act established a public corporation for healthcare and related public health services. In 2015 the hospital received full accreditation from the centers of Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) and will maintain these standards throughout the proceeding years.

Vision Statement

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation strives to improve the quality of life for the CNMI community through its innovative preventive/ urgent care services to foster responsible lifestyles.

Value Statement

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation is committed to exceed standards by providing a culture of quality care, honoring the dignity of its stakeholders and community, and promoting equality and accountability throughout the corporation.

Mission Statement

Improving CNMI health and well-being through excellence and innovation service.

INTRODUCTION

For the first time, the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation was selected to be a member of the 2016-2017 ASTHO Peer- to- Peer Fellowship Program. It was an honor to be selected as I strive to aggressively improve and consistently work to ensure transparency to keep CHCC and the CNMI community a clean, safe, and healthy environment. With the support from the CHCC Chief Executive Officer, Esther Muna, Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program, Hospital Emergency Preparedness Program, and Epidemiology Laboratory Capacity Director, Warren Villagomez, and Bureau of Environmental Health Director, John Tagabuel, I am confident that CHCC will engage and conduct health tracking to close the gap of information on how the environment affects health in the CNMI.

PEER TO PEER FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE

On April 19- 20, 2017, I met with several key officials from the Florida Department of Health, including, Samantha Williams, Environmental Health Analyst for ASTHO in

Florida to discuss Environmental Public Health Tracking and how CHCC can benefit from tracking activities. The peer- to peer fellowship conference consisted of various topics below:

- Tracking Zika
- Building Partnerships in Florida
- EPHT Information Technology
- Web Portal Demonstrations
- Making useful data
- Communication and Outreach
- Networking

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The peer to peer fellowship conference helped me gain knowledge about the importance of tracking critical environmental and health data. Tracking data will allow CHCC to analyze health trends and other health exposures in the CNMI by location, age, ethnicity, illnesses, etc. The data collected on hazard, exposure, and health effects are an ongoing evaluation in improving health in the CNMI. As a result, tracking data not only identifies areas of improvement, but also helps CHCC collaborate and identify what measures CHCC must take action on to resolved those issues.

After meeting with the Florida Health Department it is my goal to report to CHCC management on the importance of investing in a health tracking program and assist public health programs in bringing awareness to communities and educating these communities on the importance of health. Thus, tracking is a surveillance mechanism that unfolds the collection, interpretation and reports on concerning health and environmental issues.

The relationship that I have built with the Florida Public Health Department has assured me that they are willing to assist and mentor me in building a robust infrastructure for environmental health tracking and developing strategies and tools to improve the health of the CNMI community. Thus, my goal is also to enhance collaboration and share information with our partner agencies such as the Division of

Environmental and Coastal Quality, Division of Life and Natural Resources, and other local, state and federal partners involved in environmental issues and concerns to strengthen and keep a clean, safe, and healthy community.

CONCLUSION

This is just the beginning of a great learning opportunity not only for myself, but for the entire community of the CNMI. The knowledge and skills I will build after the fellowship program will benefit CHCC and allow CHCC to continue to provide quality care for the people of the CNMI. I hope to continue to learn and gain the knowledge of all other environmental health issues and concerns from the Peer- to- Peer Fellowship program as the CNMI is in great need of developing health surveillance and health impact assessments to reduce adverse health risk.