

Active campaign stressed to meet health goals

By Noimot Olayiwola
Staff Reporter

Due to resource constraints and the need to focus efforts, the National Health Strategy has suggested the prioritisation of the outputs of all its recommendations into seven potential quick wins.

The quick wins identified by the NHS were: putting pictorial warnings on cigarette packaging; calorie labelling in restaurant menus; car seats for new mothers; updating vaccination programme for adults; awareness campaigns to promote exclusive breastfeeding; data reporting requirement and capital expenditure committee.

According to the document, all the seven initiatives would generate significant visibility and have immediate impact if implemented relatively quickly.

"Make sure that all cigarette packaging (and other tobacco products) carry photographs that display the harmful effects of smoking," the NHS recommends, mentioning that such intervention has been widely used elsewhere and has a strong evidence base to support the hypothesis that it will be effective in Qatar.

"Research has shown that for smokers, cigarette packaging is a key source of information on the adverse effects of their habit," the document said.

On calorie labelling in restaurants' menus, the NHS has suggested that all menus, especially in fast food outlets, should mention the number of calories in listed items.

The health strategy document mentions that a similar regulation has been implemented in New York, where researchers found that people who considered the new calorie information, bought items with 106

fewer calories than those who did not. "They also found that calorie consumption went down at nine of 13 restaurants surveyed after the regulations went into effect," it said, adding that calorie labelling will have impact on the issue of fast food consumption in Qatar.

While mentioning that promoting the use of car seats is required, the NHS maintains that car seats are not yet widely used in Qatar, as in 2008, 9% of Qatari road deaths were of children under the age of nine. "Providing mothers of newborns with car seats at the time of discharge from the hospital would support their use and potentially inculcate the habit at an early age," it has recommended.



On updating the vaccination programme for adults, the NHS said: "Although, Qatar has a fairly robust vaccination programme for children, there is no comprehensive programme targeted at adults."

However, the document says that Qatar should update its vaccination programme for adults as such an initiative would reduce the burden of vaccine-preventable diseases among adults.

"Qatar could consider the latest recommendations for vaccines that protect against influenza, pneumococcal infection, tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis, human papillomavirus and herpes zoster. This programme should also target high risk groups like travellers to foreign countries," it said.

The NHS also maintained that exclusive breastfeeding (BF) for

the first six months of life is one of the most critical interventions for child nutrition and survival saying: "it delivers the best nutrition and protection against many infectious diseases for infants and helps prevent chronic diseases later in life."

"Failure to immediately and exclusively breastfeed until age six months annually leads to 1.4mn deaths (12-15% of children aged under five deaths) and 43.5mn disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs)," it explained.

According to the NHS, in Qatar currently, the exclusive BF rate for the first six months is 12%, which is below the 50% threshold recommended by the United Nations.

"Launching an integrated awareness campaign to promote exclusive BF is thus very much required. Integrated awareness campaigns leverage mass media channels, public health facilities and community settings," the document has suggested.

While mentioning that the country lacks comprehensive and accurate data on healthcare, the document suggests that data reporting requirements should be established and disseminated for all healthcare providers. "These could be based on best practices from healthcare systems worldwide and can leverage an existing project underway in the Health Information System department at the Supreme Council of Health," it said.

To co-ordinate the building up of healthcare infrastructure (facilities and high-ticket equipment), the NHS recommends that a capital expenditure committee should be set up, saying: "A task force, comprising members of relevant stakeholders, can be set up to define and design the capital expenditure committee."

Independent body sought to support patients' rights

The National Health Strategy has called for the establishment of a fully independent patient advocacy body that will address patients' grievances and support their rights.

"The entity must be an ombudsman who provides feedback and monitoring as required and the body needs to be composed of the appropriate mix of individuals with sufficient medical, legal and clinical knowledge and representation of the consumers."

"This entity would function

to reconcile differences between consumers and providers of services; assist in the resolution of complaints; protect patients' rights to receive safe and effective care; protect patient information; and develop and define a patients' bill of rights," the NHS has highlighted.

According to the document, the vision and goal of Qatar's healthcare system is to be centred on the patient and part of realising the vision involves ensuring that patients are engaged as customers and their views are heard appropriately.

"A basic requirement is to have an adequate mechanism for patients to receive independent support on healthcare concerns and complaints," the health strategy document has said.

The NHS has mentioned that currently, the Supreme Council of Health's Medical Licensing department provides the only external route for patients to place complaints, adding that it is critical that the country have an independent body to act as a patient advocate and support patients, ensuring that their rights are maintained and their concerns

are heard. While noting that currently, there is no such independent mechanism, the document suggests the best practice example from Victoria in Australia where the Health Services Commissioner's office acts as the ombudsman for healthcare.

"The office helps people make their concerns known to healthcare providers; arbitrates, formally or informally, between consumers and service providers; assists in the resolution of complaints; and protects a patient's right of access to his or her health information," it said.

Expat forum discusses formation of new council



Bangabandhu Parishad Qatar Chapter president S M Faridul Hogue, acting general secretary Mohamed Nurul Alam and other officials met Bangladesh National Parliament deputy speaker Shawkat Ali and five other visiting members of Parliament in Doha recently, and discussed about forming the new council of the organisation. Ali assured the officials that on his return to Dhaka, he would discuss the matter with Bangabandhu Parishad Bangladesh general secretary Dr S A Malek and request him to send a representative to Qatar for the task.

Cricket fiesta

The Doha Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) held its 15th Annual Cricket Fiesta at the Ideal Indian School's new ground.

The HDFC team won the competition. Deloitte & Touche was runner-up. Centerpoint and Ernst & Young were the other competitors. All the teams comprised members of the chapter.

Pankaj Singhvi was named the man of the match and Parvez Siddiqui man of the tournament. Siddiqui

and Narayanan were man of the match for preliminary rounds.

Other leading performers were C Ramesh, Abdul Salaam, Amit Khanna, Jaisankar, Ravishankar, Sheji and Krishnakumar. Trophies were given away by HDFC branch head Jaison Cherian and Centerpoint group finance manager Amit.

Chapter chairman Girish Jain congratulated the organising committee and the executive committee. Chapter vice chairman Venkat Ramamurthy proposed a vote of thanks.



The winning team with their trophies.

McDonald's in new product offering

McDonald's has launched a new premium Grand Chicken range as part of its dedication to continuously meet consumers' needs in the region.

The range will offer customers first-rate quality chicken sandwiches with McDonald's trademark real flavour and rich taste which comes from combining juicy

chicken patties, fresh and crispy vegetables and dressings, and the best sauces. It comprises three sandwiches: the Classic, the Deluxe and the Special, all featuring 100% pure and Halal tasty breaded patties made of chicken breasts, sourced from trusted suppliers who follow the brand's stringent best practices. The Grand Chicken Classic features

a tasty breaded patty made of chicken breasts embraced in a soft bun with corn meal topping, crispy fresh lettuce and garlic mayo sauce. The Grand Chicken Deluxe also features a tasty breaded patty made of chicken breasts topped with crisp lettuce, juicy tomatoes, two slices of Emmental cheese and a twist of mayo mustard sauce.

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Kerala group set to launch activities

Babu Paul, a former Indian civil servant will formally inaugurate the activities of the expatriate forum, Idukki District Expatriate Association (Idea Qatar) at a ceremony to be held next month.

Paul, a retired civil service officer was incidentally the first collector of the eastern hilly district of Idukki from which hail the members of Idea Qatar. Idukki district came into being in the early 70s.

Paul, who served in different capacities including that of chairman at Cochin Port Trust will be the main speaker at the inaugural ceremony of Idea at the Doha Cinema to be held on May 27. Paul retired as additional chief secretary of Kerala state more than five years ago. Indian embassy minister Sanjiv Kohli will be the chief guest.

The forum office-bearers said one of the main objectives of the organisation is to showcase artistic talents of its members and their families. "We will consider hosting a few stage and sport events in the coming months to boost our members and their friends," said an office-bearer.

The inauguration ceremony will be followed by a cultural programme led by the famous caricaturist Jayaraj Warriar.

A musical orchestra featuring Wilsaraj (Idukki) and Vrinda Menon (Rain Drops fame, Kairali TV) is also on the schedule among other events.



Babu Paul

New office-bearers elected

CCC Malayali Samajam, a leading socio-cultural organisation of the country's Keralaite expatriates elected its new office-bearers for the next two years.

While H Nizam is retained as the forum's chairman, C S Narayana Kurup is the general convener. Abraham George is the financial controller. Others

elected to the general body are: Vineeth Mohan, Prem Kumar, Sajeev Kumar, Valsaraj (RGX Unit Ras Laffan), Bhaskaran Nair, M P Samuel, Radhakrishnan K B (RLP Unit, Ras Laffan), Jose Dcruz, Ajaya Ghosh, Sebastian N J, Sajith VV, Koshy (GTL Unit) and Babu Raj T P, Radhakrishnan, Anoop, Prasanth V Kurup (Al Khor Unit).



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