THE NEWS EDITOR

PRESS RELEASE
CHOLERA ALERT TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Cholera is one of the diseases of national concern because of the potential it has to cause outbreaks and major epidemics. As the rains have started to set in at certain locations of the country and will be getting to the peak season very soon, with the attendant and other existing prevailing risk factors, the risk for cholera outbreaks is very high.

This correspondence is to inform the general public to be cautious and to do their best to prevent and protect against cholera. Cholera is a preventable disease provided that safe water is made available and proper sanitation practices are adhered to.

Signs and symptoms of Cholera are frequent diarrhoea with or without vomiting. Cholera spreads when faeces and/or vomitus of infected person contaminates the water or food of another person and it is swallowed. Cholera can be prevented by improved environmental sanitation, personal hygiene and drinking safe water. Frequent handwashing with soap under running water is also recommended. People with suspected cholera should report to the nearest health facility without delay. Please note that early reporting saves live.

We would be very grateful if you could use your medium to educate the general public on the disease with the attached information. Attached are key facts on cholera.

We count on your usual support.

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Cholera is an acute watery diarrhoeal disease that can kill within hours if left untreated. Globally, it is estimated that 1.3 million to 4.0 million cases of cholera and 21,000 to 143,000 deaths due to cholera occur each year. Cholera is caused by the ingestion of food or water contaminated with the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*. It is a global threat to public health and a key indicator of lack of social amenities such as safe water, hygiene and sanitation.

A person with cholera loses a lot of water and salts rapidly, becomes very weak and extremely thirsty. If the person does not receive treatment early, the weakness progresses, and the person may collapse. This can rapidly progress to death.

The main signs of Cholera for a person to report are:
Frequent diarrhoea (3 or more loose or watery stools in a day) with or without vomiting

**How is cholera spread?**
- The Cholera germs are found in the feces or vomitus of infected people.
- Cholera is spread when faeces from an infected person gets into the water people drink or the food people eat.

**The following are the risk factors for cholera disease and outbreaks:**
- Slums (urban and peri-urban)
- Poor environmental sanitation
- Poor personal hygiene
- Poor food hygiene
- Displaced populations with unsafe water supply and poor sanitation
- Floods leading to contamination of domestic water sources
- Broken down water and waste disposal facilities

**Protect yourself and your family from cholera and other diarrheal diseases:**
- Drink and use safe water.
  - Safe water is water that is bottled with an unbroken seal, direct from bore hole, or other sources that has been boiled or treated with a chlorine product such as pipe-borne water.
- Wash hands often with soap under running water (always visiting the toilet, before eating or feeding a child and before preparing food). If soap is not available, scrub hands with hand-sanitizer/alcohol rub, ash or sand and rinse with safe water.
- Use latrines or bury your feces. Do not defecate into any water body.
- Cook food well (especially seafood), eat it hot, keep it covered,
- Wash fruits and vegetables very well before consumption.
- Keep your kitchen and places where your family bathes and washes clothes clean at all times.

**What to do if you or any of your family is ill with diarrhea:**
- If you have Oral Rehydration Salt (ORS), prepare a solution and start taking it immediately. This can save your life. It will be a good idea to have few sachets of ORS at home all the time.
- Go to the nearest health facility immediately. Continue to drink ORS at home and while you travel to get treatment.
- Continue to breastfeed your baby if they have watery diarrhea, even when traveling to get treatment.