

PRESS RELEASE

No. 766/2017

Date: 20th December 2017

A new facility creates an enhanced Cardiac Rehabilitation Centre at St Bernard's Hospital

Patients enrolled in the Cardiac Rehabilitation Centre will enjoy a new, modern facility following the addition of new equipment. The newly renovated space is designed to create an optimal, healing environment for patients with cardiopulmonary history or classified as 'high-risk'. The gymnasium is furnished with the latest equipment and a fully integrated audio-visual system, which will provide music during exercise sessions and will support education, mindfulness and relaxation needs.

The new Cardiac Rehabilitation Centre has been named in honour of the late Mr Lionel Perez, in recognition of his voluntary services. The late Mr Perez was chairperson of the Cardiac Rehabilitation Support Group, which was founded in 1998 by Mr Gerry Fortuna (Cardiac Specialist Rehabilitation Nurse). In the year 2002, he formed part of the Primary Care Patients' Forum, where he actively advocated on behalf of the patients and their families. Mr Perez became a well-known local leader, who chaired monthly meetings with the Cardiac Support Group to discuss the service's structures, processes and outcomes, in a bid to improve the quality of services being offered. His continuous involvement and dedication led to the formation of the Gibraltar Cardiac Association, a charitable association whose primary objectives are toward health equity and patient centeredness in cardiac care. In this respect, the Health Ministry and the GHA are working closely with the Association to better and fully understand the needs of cardiac patients.

Cardiac rehabilitation is geared towards improving quality of life and reducing risk associated with heart problems. It is designed specifically for people who have had recent heart problems such as angina, suffered a heart attack or have undergone heart surgery. The patients who have completed the Cardiac Rehab Programme will become eligible to join the Cardiac Rehabilitation Self-help Group, as part of the maintenance phase that focuses on independence, while helping them maintain a healthy heart.

Gerry Fortuna, Cardiac Specialist Rehabilitation Nurse, said: "I am extremely grateful to HM Government of Gibraltar and the Honourable Minister, Mr Neil F. Costa, for having recognised and acted upon the needs of our cardiac patients, their families and the importance of resourcing the service adequately, in order to help reduce the cost of both preventing and treating cardiovascular disease."

Ministry of Health, Care and Justice

HM Government of Gibraltar • Zone 1, Level 7 St Bernard's Hospital, Harbour Views Road • Gibraltar GX11 1AA

t +350 20007011 (Centrex 2027) f +350 20059942 e ministry@gha.gi w gibraltar.gov.gi



Clinical Nurse Manager, Suzanne Romero explained: “Cardiac rehab is not just about exercise, it is a comprehensive programme, which helps patients understand the importance of keeping to lifestyle modification changes that will build a healthier future and lower mortality rates.”

Dr Krish Rawal, Deputy Medical Director said: “I am delighted to have been involved in the recent review of this service. We are very proud of a high quality rehabilitation service, which is fully in line with clinical excellence guidelines.”

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP added: “I am impressed with this new facility. Some of my key clinicians at the Primary Care Centre have completely reviewed and refreshed a vital clinical service, which will benefit our cardiac patients and will prove pivotal in our continued drive to improve and modernise the health services which we provide to our community. Although I say this often, I feel truly fortunate to be surrounded by such hard working and compassionate clinical teams. I also wish to thank the Gibraltar Cardiac Association and in particular, its chairman Mr Troy Jeffries and its secretary, Mr Maurice Ignacio for bringing to my attention various important matters relating to the care of cardiac patients. It is only by listening and actioning association’s recommendations, and by understanding patients’ needs, that we will continue to improve our health services delivery”.