



**SOLOMON ISLANDS
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES
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**Two days' COVID-19 simulation exercise enables MHMS to enhance its
COVID-19 preparedness and response**

Media Release 26th May 2020 - A two days COVID-19 simulation exercise conducted by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) enabled the Ministry to identify gaps to improve its preparedness and response to possible entry and outbreak of Covid-19.

The exercise was conducted on 20th and 21st of May before and throughout the 36 hours' lockdown and was part of the National Disaster Operations Committee's effort to test national system capabilities to respond to Covid-19

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services Mrs. Pauline McNeil highlighted during the weekly COVID-19 oversight committee radio talk back show over the weekend that, the simulation exercise was very useful in assisting National Health Emergency Operations Centre (NHEOC) to identify gaps that needs to be bridged, and strengthened.

“The simulation exercise was indeed useful in enabling all teams under the NHEOC, from public health, planning and clinical operation to admin and finance and risk communication to identify gaps that needs to be addressed in order that we effectively and efficiently prepare and respond to COVID-19”, explained Mrs. McNeil.

She outlined that this includes reviewing and updating Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) of various teams under NHEOC to ensure synchronization and harmonization to fill in those gaps identified during the exercise.

Mrs. McNeil also shared that one of the areas that MHMS had also identified and will work to improve is on timely sharing of information amongst NHEOC teams in order that responses are also conducted in a timely manner. “We've noted this shortfall and will make sure that improvements be made since delays in sharing of information affects all other elements of the COVID-19 response”.

The two days' simulation exercise involved individuals presenting COVID-19 like signs and symptoms to clinics in Honiara, transported by ambulance to the National Referral Hospital, admitted, tested and isolated. It also includes contact tracing of family and friends who have come into close contact with the COVID-19 patient and timely and accurate dissemination of information to keep public well informed with correct and accurate information.

MHMS Permanent Secretary acknowledged the participation of front line health workers, supporting staff and volunteers who have made the exercise last week a successful one.

“Without your commitment and dedication MHMS would not have carried out the simulation exercise successfully and more importantly in identifying the existing gaps. I would also like to thank our partners who have also provided the necessary support throughout the exercise”, said, Mrs. McNeil.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services reminds the public to remain vigilant and continue practicing COVID-19 preventative measures of frequent handwashing with water and soap or hand sanitizer, covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and maintain social distancing of at least one to two meters.

For further inquiries, please contact Atenia Tahu Corporate Communications Officer, Ministry of Health and Medical Services on phone: 7478857 or email ATahu@moh.gov.sb.