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***UWI Telehealth Programme 2014***

**Methanex pledges US $150,000 to UWI Telehealth programme**

At a media launch at the Hyatt Hotel, Port of Spain yesterday (Wednesday 19th March), Methanex Trinidad Limited announced its pledge of US $150,000 over the next 3 years in support of The UWI Telehealth programme, which has helped children with complex medical conditions gain access to quality medical care through the use of telecommunications and videoconferencing technology.

Since its launch in 2004, The UWI Telehealth programme, with offices located at the Faculty of Medical Sciences, Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex at Mount Hope, has helped children from 228 families with complicated medical needs, including congenital defects of the bowel, heart, nervous system and other organs, as well as developmental problems such as paediatric cancer and blood disorders, gain access to affordable, quality health care.

There have been 223 consultations with local and international health care professionals and 19 children have benefitted from free surgeries at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), Canada's most research-intensive hospital and the largest centre dedicated to improving children's health in Canada. These surgeries have been paid for by the Herbie Fund at an estimated cost of US $1.6 million. The survival rate for those who have benefitted from the programme is 100%.

The Hon. Minister of Health Dr. Fuad Khan praised both The UWI and Methanex Trinidad Limited for developing the initiative. Similarly, Programme Director, **Professor Zulaika Ali** emphasized the many benefits of the multi-faceted initiative.

“UWI Telehealth has enabled children with complex medical conditions access world-class medical care in a compassionate, comfortable yet professional environment and in a timely manner,” she added. “The consultations also benefit our medical practitioners at home and abroad, as we are able to share our expertise and learn from these complicated medical scenarios. We are grateful to Methanex Trinidad Limited for seeing the importance of this initiative and helping us to continue to assist those in need.”

Managing Director and CEO of Methanex Trinidad Limited, **Charles Percy** sees the programme as beneficial on several levels. “We recognize the value of the programme, both from the perspective of helping children and the opportunity for learning that is available to local medical students and professionals, through participation in the consultations. Here was an opportunity to provide financially challenged patients with access to a world class facility and treatment that is not available locally, while at the same time, support the capacity building of local health professionals. The sustainability element of this programme is commendable. By enhancing medical knowledge and closing capacity gaps, we will, in the long run, strengthen our local health service offering.”

The UWI Telehealth programme was initially a partnership of UWI, ATLANTIC, the Ministry of Health, Trinidad and Tobago, SickKids Hospital and the Herbie Fund in Toronto, Canada. ATLANTIC was the major sponsor for 8 years until the end of 2012. Methanex Trinidad Limited has come on board as the major sponsor for an initial 3-year period beginning 2014.

*The Mission of the programme is to improve access to high quality paediatric health care by integrating telehealth into standard health care delivery system and enhancing information sharing and collaboration with specialist health care centres abroad.*

***For more information please contact : (868) 663-1610; email:uwitelehealth@sta.uwi.edu ; or visit: www.sta.uwi.edu/telehealth.***