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Published: Monday | March 30, 2020 | 12:24 AM

THE EDITOR, Madam:

WE WRITE in response to a letter published in **The Gleaner** on March 25, 2020, ‘Vulnerable students left in the cold’.

The University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona campus, wishes to refute claims that the health insurance coverage for students is not accessible outside of the UWI Health Centre (UHC).

At UWI, the health, safety and well-being of our students is a priority. As such, we provide health insurance for our students to reduce health-related risks, allowing for access to affordable and reliable healthcare services.

All registered students become eligible for the university’s mandatory health insurance plan and are issued health cards at the start of each academic year, once their miscellaneous fees are paid.

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1. Access to the health Plan on and off campus

In order to access the benefits under the plan, students must obtain their medical and dental health services and prescription drugs at the UWI Health Centre, located on campus or at any public hospital islandwide. Students have the option to submit a claim for medical expenses incurred at public hospitals, which is outlined in the Health Insurance Policy Guidelines issued with the health cards.

Additionally, if students access private emergency care, once evidence of prescription drugs purchased is presented to the UWI Health Centre, students are approved for reimbursements. The costs for private doctor’s visit for emergency care, however, is not covered for reimbursement.

As with all health insurance plans, there are limitations to what is covered, especially as it relates to prescription drugs. Students are encouraged to seek supplemental health insurance, for example, through the National Health Fund (NHF) for further coverage for underlying health conditions.

2. Student’s claim of being denied prescription drugs at the UWI Health Centre and the University Hospital of The West Indies

Prescriptions written by public hospitals are honoured by the pharmacy at the UWI Health Centre when a student's health card is presented.

The university is unaware of the nature of the situation in this case, so is unable to address the matter of why the student would have been denied access to prescription drugs at both the University Hospital of The West Indies and The UWI Mona Health Centre – two of the primary health care facilities for members of our university community.

We wish to encourage students to be proactive with their health matters and seek the necessary support by bringing such matters to the attention of the university should they experience challenges accessing health care or any other service available to them.

Out of an abundance of caution, we have recirculated information to all students as it relates to their benefits covered under the University's Health Insurance Plan.

The university would like to use this opportunity to advise all concerned students and staff, that all necessary health care costs associated with the testing and treatment of infectious diseases and medical conditions, including COVID-19, is covered by the university's health insurance scheme.

Office of the Campus

Registrar

University of the West Indies,

Mona

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