

## Appendix A3

**Ansa McAl is only company to ever provide cold storage facilities for drugs –Lawrence**  
Kaiteur News, Mar 12, 2017

<http://www.kaiteurnewsonline.com/2017/03/12/ansa-mcal-is-only-company-to-ever-provide-cold-storage-facilities-for-drugs-lawrence/>

*—Even though NEW GPC was sole supplier for over 20 years  
— Other companies were not a part of contract for emergency drugs due to ongoing investigations*

The collusion between moles in the public health system and a few crooked suppliers of pharmaceuticals is what led to the Minister of Public Health, Volda Lawrence, taking a controversial route in the recent procurement of emergency pharmaceuticals for the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC).

The minister made this statement to the press yesterday in an effort to correct misleading comments in some sections in the media.

The misguided comments, she said, were in relation to certain documents which were leaked to the media, giving the false impression that the hospital tried to procure drugs from Ansa McAl Trading Limited through sole sourcing.

Lawrence stressed however that Ansa McAl was among four companies from which these emergency supplies were procured. The other companies were New GPC, Health 2000 and Chirobyn Discovery.

The Minister of Public Health said that other companies were not a part of this process due to ongoing investigations into their late/or non-delivery of critical drugs which they were contracted to procure for GPHC during 2016.

She said that some of these pharmaceuticals were overdue by as much as six months, which exacerbated the drug shortage at the hospital.

She explained that moves were made to fast track the procurement of these pharmaceuticals to minimise the negative effects on patients due to the shortage of some critical drugs.

“This influenced the decision to seek the green light from the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) for Ansa McAl to supply drugs and pharmaceuticals to the tune of some \$605M.”

Lawrence explained that Ansa McAl is one of only two companies in Guyana that can provide the cold chain storage necessary to maintain the integrity of a wide range of pharmaceuticals that are critical in the health care sector, in Guyana.

“Ansa McAl not only air freighted the drugs (this helped spike the cost to import the items) for the public health sector, but also donated four refrigerators to GPHC to store the emergency supplies at the internationally acceptable temperature of 20 to 80C. No other company in the history of the institution has provided cold storage facilities at the hospital even though, at least

one of them (NEW GPC) was the sole supplier of pharmaceuticals to the institution for over 20 years.”

Lawrence said that all pharmaceuticals for the entire nation was sole-sourced from that company for billions of tax-payers’ dollars. During that period, she said that GPHC used icepacks to store these sensitive drugs at the facility, because the main refrigerator was in poor condition and unable to maintain the correct temperature for these drugs endangering their efficacy, potency and integrity.

Lawrence stressed that she was unwilling to jeopardise the sector and patients’ lives and took what may appear to be the now-controversial route.

## **MOLES**

With regard to moles at the GPHC procurement system, the Minister said that she is aware that they have been constantly leaking information to the media with the aim of discrediting officials of the institution and often-times it is misinformation.

She stressed that the tender process was never breached and the route to procure the emergency supplies was fast tracked.

Lawrence said that the National Procurement and Tender Board Act makes provision for such, and the same suppliers would have emerged.

“My priority is to ensure the nation’s health is given top priority. The health system will not be held hostage by unprincipled persons and therefore I made the decision to shortlist the critical but unavailable items and the suppliers with the ability to provide them on time to avert deepening the drug demand difficulties,” Lawrence explained.

She added that the Public Health system needs urgent and massive overhaul. She found that several procurement officials are not only unqualified for the job, but also unwilling to follow protocols and processes thus helping to “create a sand storm” within the health sector.

Consequently “slippages are many and gaps are very wide” Lawrence said.

The slippages, Lawrence said, still exist “because health is a lucrative sector and a magnet for corrupt individuals and venal firms. Hence, many have fallen victim to the allure of dishonest gain.”

“Without a shadow of doubt this shortage is manmade and created to cheat the country of medical supplies and cash...but I am not for sale,” Lawrence said.

The Public Health Minister said that the engineered shortage of drugs in the system meant that drugs that should have been in the public health system since 2016 to cater for demands in the first quarter of this year are not there and this has far reaching implications for the tender process for drugs.

She said that she is bracing for a fierce fight from suppliers and inflexible staff opposition because they now feel threatened by the new course being chartered for the public health system.

The fresh wind of change she said has brought open tender, a proper procurement policy which includes computerisation of information, storage of critical drugs under internationally acceptable conditions and the placement of pharmacists in wards of the GPHC.

The Pan American Health Organisation and World Health Organisation (PAHO/WHO) are throwing their support behind local efforts to help develop a proper and accountable public health system.

PAHO/WHO is helping to shape policy directions in the areas of procurement, distribution, storage and managing consumption levels of pharmaceuticals at the GPHC.

Lawrence said that the current difficulties in the public health system are compounded by an inability to forecast future needs accurately as a result of its reliance on a manual system which is rarely updated.

Lawrence wants this ended immediately and has promised new measures to accomplish this. The first step was taken Friday last when she met with several delinquent suppliers at her Brickdam, Georgetown office.

“The policy and standards will be rigorously applied to guarantee the safety of the Guyanese people who are my first interest,” Lawrence said.