



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL
CORPORATE COMMUNICATION SERVICES

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**UPDATE: OUTBREAK- MAHATMA GANDHI
MEMORIAL HOSPITAL**

KwaZulu-Natal Premier Dr. Sbu Ndebele, Health MEC Mrs Neliswa Nkonyeni, all the MEC's in the province and the Head of Departments in the Province express their condolences to the families of the deceased babies following the outbreak of the Klebsiella bacteria at the Neonatal ICU nursery at Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital. Speaking on behalf of her department and her Cabinet colleagues, Health MEC Nkonyeni said, "This is really a sad day for our department and for our province, and it must be devastating for the families. Accordingly we pass our sincere condolences to them, our thoughts and our prayers are with them," said the MEC.

Senior Managers from the Provincial Department of Health today visited Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Durban. This outbreak started on Monday 23 May 2005. So far there are 13 confirmed Klebsiella infections and 11 babies have died. Some of the babies who died were premature. Infection control protocol was revisited and the neonatal nursery has been closed completely. Currently there are two babies in a critical condition. One is at Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital and the other has been transferred to Mt Edgecombe hospital. The hospital is not admitting any babies to the neonatal ICU nursery and the transfer of babies in and out of Mahatma Gandhi hospital has been stopped.



Speaking to journalists during the press conference at the hospital today, Dr Sibongile Zungu, Senior General Manager for Health Services Cluster said, “The provincial department of health views this outbreak very seriously and with great concern that we have lost babies. The department has set up infection control sections in all 62 hospitals to minimize the impact of such infections. Our condolences go out to the families,” said Dr Zungu.

The department will continue with the surveillance of the infection, “We will assist families with grief counselling and ensure in the future that such incidents are minimized,” said Dr Zungu.

She reiterated that this outbreak can affect any other hospital anywhere in the world and that the outbreak is not only confined to the Neonatal ICU section of the hospital.

The cause of the outbreak is unknown at this stage until further analysis is done.

Klebsiella is a bacteria which occurs commonly in communities as well as in specialized units in hospitals. At hospitals it tends to be dangerous for two reasons. It usually of a more virulent strain and secondly it is usually very resistant to treatment. It is an airborne infections that is very common in neonatal nurseries. In newborns (0-28 days) it causes an overwhelming infection of the blood stream which results in multiple organ failure.

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