



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION SERVICES

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO SHOULDER THE COST OF BABIES' BURIAL

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health is to contribute R7000 towards the burial of each of the 12 babies who died at Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Phoenix, Durban, following the outbreak of Klebsiella infection at the neonatal ICU of the hospital.

This contribution follows an impassioned plea to support the families from the national Health Minister, Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang who today led a high-powered delegation on a visit to the hospital. Her delegation included KZN Health MEC, Mrs Peggy Nkonyeni, KZN Health Department HOD, Professor Green-Thompson and Dr Sibongile Zungu, senior general manager : Health Services Cluster in the KZN Department of Health.

The minister announced that the a commission of enquiry is to investigate the root causes of the Klebsiella infection. So far there are 13 confirmed cases of the infection. One baby is still being treated at a private hospital, the cost of which will be borne by the department of health

“We view this outbreak seriously and we have since moved swiftly to ensure that the impact of the infection is mitigated,” said a visibly moved Minister.



Currently the hospital is not admitting any babies to the neonatal ICU nursery and the transfer of babies in and out of Mahatma Gandhi Neonatal ICU has been stopped.

The commission of enquiry will be headed Professor Adikari: Head of Paediatrics and Child Health at the Nelson Mandela School of Medicine, Professor Sturm: Head of Medical Microbiology Department at the Nelson Mandela School of Medicine and Professor Jacob Coovadia who is Prof Sturm's Deputy.

The Team will look into the causes of the infection so that the Department can deal decisively with the sources of the outbreak. Preliminary investigations reveal that the outbreak could be caused by any of the following sources:

- • Babies who are infected before entering the facility;
- • Mothers who enter the nursery to breastfeed their babies
- • Staff members who are attending to the patients
- • Nosocomial infections.

The impact of the population growth in the area can also be blamed as a contributory factor to increasing workload of the hospital. The Mahatma Ghandhi Memorial hospital – was a district hospital initially constructed to cater for a local community. It has since opened its doors to all all races catering for the entire community including neighbouring Inanda and KwaMashu and this has stretched the hospital's capacity to the limit.

The department is looking at addressing this challenge by building two new District hospitals in Inanda and KwaMashu and will also be upgrading the existing KwaMashu polyclinic.

ENDS

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