



HEALTH
KwaZulu-Natal

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MINISTER OF HEALTH STUNNED BY THE HIGH NUMBER OF TRAUMA CASES OVER THE HOLIDAY SEASON

On the 29th of December 2007, the Minister of Health together with the MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal (Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang and Ms Neliswa Nkonyeni, respectively) visited King Edward VIII and Addington Hospitals and were shocked by what health care workers have to cope with.

The purpose of the visit was to make an assessment of the workload that health care workers have to cope with and also find out what plans are in place to cope with such an increase over the holiday season. On her arrival she was informed that the KwaZulu-Natal Emergency Medical Rescue Service has attended to **7565 assault** cases and **240 gunshot** victims as of the 1st to 27th December. This is believed to be as a result of an increased alcohol and drug intake.

At King Edward Hospital the Minister and the MEC were given statistics of patients seen as of the 1st to the 29th December in trauma and emergency units. These revealed that the hospital has attended to **88 assault** cases, **74 gunshot** victims (including a family killing in Inanda where a six month old child was also shot at), **150 stab** victims, **22** cases of **domestic violence** and **433** motor vehicle accident (**MVA**) cases.

At Addington the Minister and the MEC were informed that there have been **2895** trauma patients since the 1st December and these include **606 assault** cases, **28 gun shot** victims, **312 stab** victims, **75 rape** survivors (**20** of these being **children**), **48 drunk drivers** and **442 MVA** cases.

The figures show an increase from the annual average of patients seen during the year up to November. However, plans are in place to deal with the increase in workload. What shocked the Minister and the MEC was the fact that the assaults are becoming more gruesome with most cases being stabbed in the upper parts of the body like the neck and head. The common weapons used are bottles and pangas and many cases come to the hospitals around midnight under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

The Minister and the MEC took rounds talking to staff and patients, but most importantly personally thanking staff for the good work they are doing for the people. They both listened to some of the operational challenges that were presented by

staff and committed to looking into these so that health workers' conditions are improved for the better. They also met patients some of whom were victims of assaults and motor vehicle accidents. They conveyed a message for people to refrain from over indulgence in alcoholic beverages. She also warned against the "nauseating" indulgence in drugs that seems to be breaking our society. She challenges all health care workers to join government in launching a Health Lifestyle Programme in February 2008 that will educating the public about the dangers of unhealthy habits.

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