

Media Statement

28 November 2007

It is unfortunate that we have had to face this challenge of klebsiella once again in this province after we responded to a similar challenge at Mahatma Gandhi Hospital in 2005.

Prince Mshiyeni Memorial hospital is a district and regional hospital with a huge catchment population of 1, 6 million people. It conducts about 1 200 deliveries per month.

We have received a presentation on what has happened and engaged the management and staff on a number of issues relating to the cases of klebsiella reported here.

We can confirm that there have been 7 confirmed cases and two unconfirmed cases of klebsiella at this hospital. The results on the two cases are expected tomorrow. It is important to state that the two cases are babies that were in the ward at the time when the seven cases were detected. One of these two babies was born at home with birth weight of 1, 1kg to a teenage mother who never attended antenatal care

Five of the babies affected unfortunately passed away as reported by the provincial Department yesterday. Efforts are being made to communicate and support the mothers and the families of these babies as much as possible.

All babies had low birth weight ranging from 1.15kg to 2kg. All presented with respiratory distress syndrome and one with intra-uterine growth retardation.

The presentation made indicates that the hospital management has taken reasonable measures to contain and prevent further outbreak of klebsiella here.

A microbiologist at this hospital reported of the possible outbreak of klebsiella at the hospital nursery on the 20th of November. Seven babies were diagnosed with klebsiella septicaemia with positive cultures from positive blood culture. A team was formed to respond to the challenge immediately. Swabs were taken and district and provincial offices informed. A team from Nelson Mandela School of Medicine was brought in to assist in containing the situation.

Interventions

Significant measures have been taken to ensure that no new cases emerge. These measures appear to be having effect as no new cases have been reported.

All currently in-use vials of medication and infusion fluids were discarded and replaced by new ones. No multi-dose vials are used anymore and efforts are underway to procure low dose vials of antibiotics or get pharmacists to produce smaller doses in the controlled environment.

A 24 hour laboratory emergency microbiology service was instituted to monitor the situation and remains in place.

The nursery is going to be restructured to increase space to avoid cross infections. More basins are to be added and elbow controlled taps to be procured immediately.

26 beds and theatres have been identified at Wentworth to reduce the load from Prince Mshiyeni.

Process is underway to improve the capacity of the cleaning services and the suggestion is to outsource this service.

All staff now use of disposable aprons is standard and there is close monitoring infection prevention practice in the nursery. Use of cellphones in the nursery is discouraged.

Entry to the nursery is restricted – one entrance, mothers and nursery staff only. Mothers are taught about infection control and given protective clothing. There is security controlling access.

We believe that reasonable measures have been taken to contain the situation. However there is a need for further investigation of the actual cause of the outbreak.

Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang
Minister of Health