
TO: ALL MEDIA
DATE: 23 JUNE 2009, 12H00
EMBARGO: NONE

THE SITUATION IN KWAZULU-NATAL REMAINS CALM AND WE URGE HEALTH CARE WORKERS TO RETURN TO WORK

Today, the situation in most KwaZulu Natal hospitals remains calm with 90% of hospitals operational throughout the province.

The Department has done an assessment of all hospitals in the province to check if health care workers, particularly doctors, pharmacists, dentists and emergency medical practitioners, are at work. The reports reveal that most hospitals in the province are fully operational with the exception of a few hospitals in the eThekweni area.

These include King Edward VIII Hospital which is accepting emergency cases. It is mainly the junior doctors, interns and community service doctors who are on strike. At Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital, the situation is almost similar to King Edward VIII and patients with specialists' appointments have been rescheduled. At Addington Hospital, they are also accepting emergency cases but all services are operational. At Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital, they are also treating emergency cases. RK Khan, King George, Hillcrest, Wentworth, Mahatma Gandhi Memorial, Clairwood and St Mary's Hospitals are all operational with skeleton staff.

Other Districts have reported 100% attendance, and we are also told that in areas such as Pietermaritzburg doctors' use their lunch breaks to go out and picket and come back to their patients, which we view as mature and responsible step.

"The provision of health care is a constitutional imperative which the department will work hard to protect. For this reason, we brought in the assistance of the Military Health Services to assist in some hospitals around Durban from last night. We are calling on all retired and private doctors to come out and assist where they can. Our government remains committed to the speedy resolution of the negotiations and for health care workers to return to work" says the MEC for Health, **Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo**.

The MEC has spent the rest of the day working in various hospitals around Durban. At Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital he worked in the Anti-Retroviral Clinic where he consulted patients on antiretroviral treatment programme. He will also work at Addington and Wentworth Hospitals.

For more information contact **Chris Maxon** at **0832850567**.

ENDS

ISSUED BY:

CHRIS MAXON
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH: KWAZULU-NATAL
083 285 0567