

26 May 2009

Media Statement on the Surprise Visit by the MEC for Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo

The KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, is continuing with unannounced hospital visits where he desires to meet the hard working staff of the Department of Health and to get a feel of service delivery challenges as widely reported in the media.

The MEC commenced these visits at the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital on the 6th of May 2009 followed by King Edward VIII Hospital the next day, both in eThekweni, where he was briefed and also witnessed for himself how the users of public health services are and how they would like to be treated.

Today, the MEC is visiting three hospitals in Amajuba District (Niemeyer, Madadeni and Newcastle Hospitals). He says; "I was briefed by, and personally believe, the Premier to conduct these visits in order to see for myself whether the people deployed to manage the delivery of public health services to the largely poor and marginalized people of the province do so in reality."

The MEC continued to say; "I also want to meet and greet the hard working health workers who keep our services running come rain or shine. In this province we are faced with the scourge of HIV, AIDS, low uptake of Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) programme and MDR-& XDR-TB to the point that many people refer to us as the face of these diseases. I am therefore interested in seeing how these programmes are implemented at hospital levels and how they impact on the management of other diseases, especially the non-communicable disease of lifestyle like diabetes, hypertension, obesity, etc. I am not conducting these visits in order to prove that 'a new broom sweeps cleaner' but I will continue throughout my term. The organization that sent me to this position believes that we need to forge a strong partnership with the people in the public service and the community in order to realise better health outcomes. In this regard I will continue to interact with staff, communities and the media to ensure that we all buy-in to the goal of a better life for all."

During the MEC's visits he has highlighted the urgent need to find working solutions to the care of pregnant women and newborn children. He expressed appreciation for the intervention being implemented at Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital where a team of experts is reviewing maternal and child care with a view of coming up with solutions for reducing peri-natal and maternal deaths. He has also expressed concern that the current financial woes of the department have led to non-filling of managerial critical posts in hospitals and district offices; these include Financial Managers, Human Resource Managers and others.

Later today the MEC will address Medical Doctors, Nurses, and Emergency Medical Practitioners on the on-going negotiations and the implementation of the Occupation Specific Dispensation (OSD). This function will be held at the Newcastle Town Hall from 17H00.

In the evening the District Municipality will also host him in a gala dinner to thank him for his contributions in the District and to wish him well in his new position.

Ends

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