

"Cooperation in the delivery of quality health care for all is what unites us"

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"We need to embrace a common purpose. The time to view each other as private and public is over. Our nation requires – as we did during the World Cup – that we come together and find solutions."

This was the message from the MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal and the Chief Executive Officer of Netcare Limited (UK and SA); Drs Sibongiseni Dhlomo and Richard Friedland respectively, speaking at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the KwaZulu-Natal Specialists Network held at the Hilton Hotel yesterday evening.

The MEC and the CEO were guest speakers at the AGM of the KZN Specialists Network, an organization of medical specialists working in both public and the private sectors who were meeting to elect new leadership and adopting a programme for the coming year.

When opening the AGM, the Chairperson; Dr Andrew Ramdaas, said; "We are thankful to the two guest speakers we have invited to address this meeting on key and topical issues. The state of health care needs all players to participate. The unity displayed when we hosted the World Cup needs to be taken forward into all aspect of social services especially health care. During the World Cup all South Africans made the event colorful and a success because of collective efforts."

The AGM was sponsored by Aspen Pharmacare pharmaceuticals. The Network members elected a new leadership and discussed what was in store for them from the National Health Insurance (NHI) which government is proposing to implement to improve access to health care for all citizens. "The NHI process is very consultative and we are required to engage with the process and together come up with solutions as we did during the World Cup" added Dr Ramdaas.

In South Africa; 13, 6 million people are employed out of the total population of around 50 million. 4, 8 million are registered tax payers. Government is responsible for providing health care to 84% of the total population and the remaining 16% has medical aid.

Addressing the AGM; Dr Richard Friedland of Netcare Limited said; "South Africa's health care is very complex because of the high disease burden. A research in US pointed out that this century will be defined by growing health care needs and by 2100 health care will be the biggest sector. We cannot afford to continue seeing health care in the eyes of private and public."

He said that the issues around the NHI should not be mainly around funding model as many would like to make an issue around this matter. In this country, he said, the most poor get only nursing care, with the middle income earners receiving general practitioner care and the private hospital care services are a preserve of the rich and those who can afford.

He announced that; "We recently sent a team of general practitioners and nurses to be trained on the Tara Klamp method because we want to make a contribution in that area. We are prepared to pay general practitioners who will assist in the medical male circumcision campaign that the department is implementing. We also want to mention that there are already 300 doctors who want to help in the HIV Counseling and Testing campaign, especially targeting young people. We will pay them for their services."

The MEC started his address by congratulating the network for its AGM and the new leadership that had been elected. He said that specialists are special in society as they are the pillars in the health

care sector.

“The President, during his State of the Nation Address mentioned that the NHI will be implemented in an incremental approach. At no stage will we wake up, one day, and be told we now have a NHI in place.” Dr Dhlomo, MEC for Health told the meeting.

He further said that the ten point plan is part of the efforts to improve services ahead of NHI implementation. “When you go to a stadium and seat next to a person who coughs heavily because of MDR-TB, you too are at risk of getting it. So, while you need to protect yourself against such diseases, you also need to protect those who cannot afford care from contracting such diseases. That is the spirit of the NHI” said the MEC

Speaking of public health care services, he admitted that the public health care services are facing serious challenges and the department has now adopted six critical points against which hospital CEO's performance will be measured. These include; (i) cleanliness: the outsourcing of these services will be reversed so as to ensure that CEOs are accountable for the cleanliness of their facilities. He said cleanliness is close to godliness, as the saying goes. (ii) attitudes of staff: CEOs need to ensure that they instill the ethos of courtesy on staff, (iii) long queues: managers need to organize the operations of the hospitals such that no one has to spend the two days waiting for medicines, (iv) infection control: he reminded members of the old ‘no nonsense nurses’ who would not allow a doctor into an operating theatre if he did not wash his/her hands properly, and (v) safety and security of patients: he mentioned that these services need to assure the safety of patients and they will now be under the department.

“All the bad outcomes are in this province. We are delighted by the hand of help announced by Dr Friedland. We are also committed to turning the tide against maternal outcomes. We'll engage your executive to see how we could work together” the MEC continued.

In closing the MEC announced; “Through a funding from the US – Atlantic Philanthropy – we will employ midwives who will mentor other midwives in the various districts in the management of 1st and 3rd stage of labour. We hope these interventions will assist us in reducing the number of women dying because of pregnancy related complication.”

Ends

For comments from Dr R Friedland (Netcare SA & UK), please call him on 082 822 0200.

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