

Public urged to collect their chronic medicines from public hospitals

TO: ALL MEDIA

DATE: 29 AUGUST 2010

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The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health wishes to advise the public receiving chronic treatment from public hospitals to collect their medicines from hospitals and clinics.

Since the beginning of the public servants strike public hospital have been affected with many healthcare workers not being able to go to work and patients being prevented from accessing healthcare facilities. This lead to the KwaZulu-Natal government applying for and being granted a court interdict to prevent protestors from intimidating workers and patients, declaring 50 meters as the picket line and compelling all essential workers to go back to work.

The strike has also affected patients on chronic medication, others on tuberculosis and antiretroviral treatment from getting their medicines. The Head of Department (HoD), Dr Sibongile Zungu, has said; "Our province is, in many instances, characterized as the face of TB and HIV. It was in this province where multidrug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) and extreme drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB) came to be regarded as a crisis. When Tb patients go without their medication we risk spreading these two types of Tb to the general population."

In KwaZulu-Natal over 120 000 people are on the Tb treatment programme and over 400 000 more are on ARV programmes. Those on ARVs are supposed to take their medications on a daily basis and if they miss a single day on the life long treatment they put their progress a ten steps backwards. Other patients receive diabetic, hypertension or psychiatric treatment might develop serious complications (such as coma, stroke, etc) if they default from such treatment programmes. The risks of treatment failure and the development of widespread resistance (in case of ARV and Tb in particular) are enormous unless we provide continuous access to treatment.

"We wish to let the public know that we have not closed any of our facilities in spite of the public servants strike. To ensure that AIDS, TB and chronic diseases can continue to be treated, it is essential that effective adherence support is an integral part of any treatment programme. It is for this reason that we urge the public to go to their respective facilities and get their medicines. The labour court has interdicted strikers from intimidating patients from accessing health care facilities. The SAPS are also deployed in all facilities to protect the right of the public and workers. Our facilities will announce alternative plans where the impact of the strike has made it difficult for service delivery" concluded the HoD.

Ends

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