

TO: ALL MEDIA  
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## **Media Statement - 'Engaging in some form of physical activity is good for the country' – MEC Dhlomo**

The MEC for Health in Kwazulu-Natal Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo woke up and joined more than fifty healthcare workers of King Edward VIII Hospital during a kilometer walk and forty five minutes aerobics class at the hospital premises.

“I walk for three kilometers to work every morning,” said Ms Juliet Kubisa (59) who is a Nursing Manager at the Hospital during the early morning walk. “I think the MEC is starting a very good programme which needs to be supported by young workers, in particular, in order to have healthier adult lives.”

The MEC was launching a workplace healthy lifestyle programme where he will be calling upon all health care workers to be exemplary to their patients by living active and healthy lifestyles. The 2006 Labour Force Survey estimates that KwaZulu-Natal employs 19% of the total South African labour force estimated at over 21 million. The South African District Health Survey estimates that chronic diseases of lifestyle, as a group, account for 36 and 40% of deaths among South Africans. The other main causes of death are HIV and AIDS, other communicable diseases excluding HIV and AIDS and injuries. The common chronic diseases include stroke, ischaemic heart disease (IHD), diabetes mellitus (DM), hypertensive heart disease (HHD) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Speaking to the workers, MEC Dhlomo said; “What you are starting here today is not only good for yourselves but good for the country as well. The amounts of money that government spends towards the health care of its own employees could be used for other developmental projects. A person who engages in some form of physical activity protects his or herself from the onset of many preventable diseases. I urge your management to allow you time to engage in these classes as well as to arrange for the night staff to also have a similar opportunity.”

The MEC is championing the promotion of healthy lifestyles in communities as well as workplaces. He believes that workplaces are particularly important because it where workers spent the larger part of their daily lives. He also says that if workplaces were to start these programmes it would reduce absenteeism due to ill health, improve cohesion among workers, increase productivity and reduce medical costs.

An administration worker Ms Sheena Bisseru (36) said that she is hopeful that the spirit of the MEC would be adopted by all workers in all work environments. “In the early ‘90s we had sports tournaments where I played volleyball. I so wish this can bring such tournaments back because we could play with other hospitals thereby improving collegial relations.”

The MEC announced that he would be starting a similar programme at the Department of Health’s head office in Pietermaritzburg soon.

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