

TO: ALL MEDIA
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Media Statement : KZN Health MEC outlines the 2012 resolutions for his department

Today, the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Health Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo visited Stanger Hospital to welcome New Year babies and thanked all healthcare workers for a successful year in 2011. He then wished the healthcare workers all the best in the New Year and set priorities for the New Year, 2012.

MEC Dhlomo said; "The New year will be ground-breaking in that we will be introducing the long awaited National Health Insurance (NHI)." The MEC went further to outline that the key priority in this regard will be to ensure that; (i) the Department fast-tracks the infrastructure development and hospital revitalisation projects, (ii) Districts have social mobilisation and communication plans to popularise the NHI at community levels, (iii) scale up the 'Make Me Look like a Hospital' project in all hospitals and not only those where the NHI will be piloted, and (iv) to fast track the strengthening of hospital management programme.

The National Minister had started a programme where all hospital managers were assessed for suitability in terms of skills, knowledge and qualifications. Hospitals were also categorised into clear categories (i.e. levels of care) with minimum requirements set for people to manage each category. The assessment reports were sent to individual managers and the Head of Departments to manage the placement of those who were found not to meet the required criterion.

The MEC continued; "We live in a province where the quadruple burden of disease is most pronounced. We will continue to focus on programmes that seek to change this unfortunate situation." In this regard, says the MEC, we will finalise the strengthening of the school health programme by employing and placing appropriately qualified nurses throughout the Province. We also roll out the Five Point Contraceptive (family planning) Strategy that was launched by the Premier in October last year, he added.

"We will also introduce District Obstetric Mentor Teams to ensure that we improve on maternal outcomes. In the same token we want to eliminate mother to child transmission of HIV so that no child born to an HIV positive mother acquires the virus." The province was heralded by the world for the successful reduction of mother to child transmission of HIV from 21% five years ago to a mere 2, 3% in 2011.

He also announced that the Department will scale up and introduce the Medical Male Circumcision (MMC) campaign in the private sector. Other HIV related programmes would be to intensify the campaign in high risk groups such as long distance truckers and taxi drivers as well farm workers. The Department will provide HIV Counseling and Testing (HCT) sites at taxi ranks and increase wellness centres along the major routes to improve access for taxi drivers and truckers.

The MEC further announced that he would continue with a campaign to highlight the dangers of cross generation sex which leads to high teenage pregnancies and the acquisition of HIV by young girls, as young as 13 years of age. The department has already put up billboards throughout the province warning against 'sugar daddies'.

"I will continue to work with my colleagues to promote the benefits of healthy lifestyles. The other area of concern is the high incidence of violence and trauma which is usually seen by the high road fatalities and trauma cases during peak seasons. As we announced in December, we will seek to train taxi drivers and members of communities in basic first aid and life support skills so that they can help people before the arrival of emergency medical personnel," continued the MEC.

The MEC concluded by making a call to all health care workers to join him 'on a journey of reaffirmation, remembrance, reform, and revitalization'. "As we begin the New Year, 2012, let us be reminded that we need sufficiently skilled, professional, motivated and well-supported healthcare workers who are the bedrock of a healthy nation. Let us therefore work together for A long and Healthy Life for all South Africans."

ENDS

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