

TO: ALL MEDIA  
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## **Chronic medicines delivered at doorsteps in Newcastle**

"The people in some of the surrounding areas of Newcastle (such as Lennoxton, Ivory Hills, Fairleigh) are the first, in the whole country, to have their chronic medications delivered at their doorsteps," revealed the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Health Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo during a press briefing held at Newcastle Provincial Hospital today.

The MEC was meeting and briefing the media on progress being made by the Department in improving the quality of services and introducing new ones in the National Health Insurance (NHI) pilot district, Amajuba.

"As we seek to improve the quality of public health services throughout the country we would need rationalise services in some areas, introduce new ones and move others so that there is efficiency and effectiveness.

"In this District, as you are smaller, we know that there are a number of new practices that you can introduce from which the whole country will learn and benefit. And the practice of working with ward councillors to know residents who usually come to hospitals to collect medicines and instead have these delivered in their homes is a good example," said MEC Dhlomo.

Newcastle Provincial Hospital is located in the city centre and used to be a 'whites only' hospital pre-1994. A few kilometres away, in the township, is Madadeni Hospital which was earmarked for 'blacks' providing almost the same combination of services. With the dawn of democracy, in 2005, government decided to rationalise services at the two hospitals and in other areas. The decision was not implemented immediately until recently when it proved to be unsustainable and putting pressure in one hospital.

The media briefing is part of the stakeholder engagement process that the MEC is leading in the District as the Department will start to rationalise services from the 1st of October 2012. This means that some services will no longer be available at both hospitals but in only one.

Giving a background to the decision MEC Dhlomo said the rationalization process was prompted by the duplication of services between the Madadeni and Newcastle Hospitals. "This overstretches the very limited human and financial resources available and makes the system unsustainable."

The rationalization process received support from the local Municipal Mayor, Cllr Afzul Rahman who said; "We full support this decision because we understand the challenges it poses. We are also happy and will work with the department to ensure that our residents are not negatively affected. We have already engaged the local transport providers to help with transport and have already transferred the local clinics to be under the Provincial government so that there is seamless continuum of care."

These news have not gone down well with a small section of the community who have even organised themselves into a committee. However; MEC Dhlomo believes that "continuous engagement will be to the benefit of quality healthcare in the whole area".

The MEC also announced that he is bringing 26 brand new ambulances to the Districts. "Three (3) of these will be dedicated to move patients between facilities, what we call interfacility ambulances. And two (2), adding to three (3) already operational, are dedicated to pregnant women, what we refer to as Obstetric ambulances."

The MEC announced that the Newcastle Provincial Hospital will continue to provide primary healthcare to all people but will be a dedicated mother and child hospital. The main services that this hospital will provide include; Gynaecology specialist clinic, Neonatal Surgery, Reproductive Health Care (RHC), Fertility clinic, Child Specialist clinic, Crisis Care Centre, and Mother and Child Oncology Services (Cancer).

The MEC concluded by saying; "We are expecting a lot to learn from this district and we hope that we will have the support of the whole community in these endeavours. Minister Motsoaledi will be visiting the area on the 7th & 8th October and we hope that he too will agree with in our assumptions about the District."

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