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‘What has been achieved at RK Khan Hospital will be rolled over to all hospitals in the Province,’ says KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo after RK KHAN was chosen as a winner for 2013 All Africa Public Sector Innovation Awards.

The KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo and the Head of the Department, Dr Sibongile Zungu are happy with the innovations that have been implemented at RK Khan Hospital on its Pharmacy Decongestion Project. This after the hospital was chosen as an overall winner for the 2013 All Africa Public Sector Innovation Award (AAPSIA).

The purpose of the Awards is to promote and encourage best practice in public sector innovation and service delivery. AAPSIA looks at means adopted aimed at improvising creative partnerships that have resulted in better than anticipated outcomes for the project as well as those aimed at improving internal efficiency within the public sector.

In the adjudication panel was:

- Prof Jainabah Kah – the Dean of School of Business and Public Admin at the University of Gambia
- Prof John Forje – University of Yaounde, Cameroon
- Mr Samule Mulindwa – Permanent Secretary, Rwanda, as well as
- Mr Tlohang Sekhamane – Cabinet Secretary, Government of Lesotho

With its Pharmacy Decongestion Project, RK Khan Hospital was chosen as an overall winner and its management invited to attend the recently held Conference of African Ministers of Public in Congo Brazzaville.

Officials of RK Khan Hospital were given an opportunity to showcase their innovations as part of exhibitions at the Conference. Here it came out that RK Khan Hospital Pharmacy used to deal with an average of 1800 out-patients every day. Linked to this high volume of out-patients was the shortage of pharmacists which resulted in long queues with extended waiting times for collection of prescriptions. In some instances patients were waiting until after 18h00 to collect medication and these delays impacted on the patient’s safety as they were travelling to their homes in the dark.

Inevitably, high volumes of complaints were being experienced and management decided on a Public Private Partnership as means to alleviate the problem. The solution came when the Hospital decided to work through community based centres such as temples; churches and community halls in and around Chatsworth. These centres agreed to serve as points where chronic medication can be dispersed by Pharmacy staff. The centres are deemed to be ideal because they are well known by the community members; are generally on the main bus and taxi routes and most importantly, have space for seating, parking and ablution facilities.

These innovations have resulted in the reduction of waiting times from more than 4 hours to about an hour. Acute patients visiting the pharmacy are now also experiencing a better service as the waiting time has been reduced due to chronic patients collecting their medication from the community centres. The innovation has also impacted positively on staff morale, reduced stress levels, all due to the decrease of queues and complaints from patients.

Patients collecting medication from the 13 community centres in operation are also happy because they chose centres closest to their homes which save them on travel time and costs. The average waiting time on these centres is also short as it is between 15 and 30 minutes. An added value here is that patients on these centres are more relaxed and comfortable which makes it easier for the staff to

counsel them and ensure that they are taking their medication correctly. Patients in these venues have their blood pressure and sugar levels checked monthly and are provided with refreshments are served by community based organizations.

'We are indeed very excited about this achievement as it augurs well with our preparation for the implementation of NHI and we are observing another model that we have started in Amajuba District in which we use Mobile Pharmacy Teams to deliver medication in the Sukuma Sakhe War Rooms,' says MEC Dhlomo.

ENDS.