

Message by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo appealing to all to respect the elderly as the world celebrate the International Day of Older Persons

1 October 2014

As the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health we wish to salute all the elderly citizens and wish them a long and healthy life as we join the world in observing October 1 as the International Day of Older Persons.

Today we wish to reiterate that it is a collective responsibility of all of us to ensure the safety and comfort of all elderly citizens. In our dealings with the elderly we should all the time be guided by President Nelson Mandela's teachings when he said:

"A society that does not value its older people denies its roots and endangers its future."

We should all stand up and state a resounding NO!!! to the rape and abuse of elderly women. Whilst caring for the elderly is the task for all, our appeal is geared more towards the Healthcare practitioners to give extra compassion in order to help preserve and prolong the lives of our precious citizens.

As the Health MEC, I would like to remind all healthcare professionals of our caring Government's policy which prescribes that the elderly should always receive priority when they arrive at our healthcare institutions. And their chronic medication be pre-packaged and delivered in community centres closer to where they live so as to save them from waiting in long queues.

Young people should also understand that the journey to the era of their own golden years starts with the willingness to be part of efforts to fight HIV, AIDS and Tuberculosis; Non-Communicable diseases of lifestyle as well as trauma and criminal violence.

Promotion of the Healthy Lifestyle as a way of living should be what we all are practising, preaching and marketing. It should be our way of life as it really lowers the risk of being seriously ill or dying early.

Spin-offs of physical activity are seen and experienced in the following long term benefits, namely:

- Lowers cholesterol and blood pressure levels which results in reduced risks for development of heart diseases, stroke, diabetes mellitus and other chronic diseases.
- Improves strength and flexibility which makes daily activities easier and reduces risks for osteoporosis, and other related injuries
- Improves mental health by reducing stress level, anxiety and depression.

As we commemorate this day, let us do it with an added understanding that with every R1-00 spent on physical activity one saving R100 on a medical bill towards treating Non Communicable Diseases.

A long and healthy life for all of us regardless of how we are today requires compliance to the following actions:

- Basic and regular physical activity
- Healthy eating
- Drinking plenty of water
- No to Tobacco smoking
- No to alcohol and drug abuse; and always,
- Ensuring safe sexual practices

Let us all work towards the full enjoyment of life now and in the future.

Ends