

MEDIA RELEASE

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Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo endorses the total closure of Ezakheni Clinic at night

The community of Ezakheni and its outlying areas is bound to feel the pinch of limited hours of health services in the area as a result of crime.

Since its commissioning in the late 90s, the clinic has been rendering a 24hour service. But now its 36-strong personnel, including Professional Nurses and Therapists, have said "No!" to working in the area at night.

A litany of criminal attacks and abuse that dates back to 2002 were revealed in a meeting called by the MEC and attended by a Local Mayor; Police Management; Councilors; Clinic Management and community leaders on Wednesday.

Incidents include the stabbing of security guard by a patient in 2005; the attack of a gunshot victim and staff by an assailant who followed the victim to the clinic; as well as rowdy and uncouth behavior of friends accompanying patients who dictate what treatment the Nurses should give to their pal. In one disturbing case, a nurse was forced to abandon a woman who was in labour and instead prioritise an intoxicated man with a stab wound.

The latest attack, on June 26 2014 resulted in staff members getting psychological counselling after a criminal gang invaded the Clinic and assaulted security guards, took their cellphones, manhandled nurses and fired shots with a Rifle. The following day no staff member turned up for work and thereafter a decision was taken not to operate after 4pm.

Yesterday, Dhlomo informed the community of the repercussions of this decision, announcing that already there are people who have come requiring emergency attention that have been turned away and referred to St Chad's Clinic which is more than 30 kilometers away. Those who could not be assisted included a woman who was in labour, a stabbed man and an asthmatic child.

Ezakheni Township, where the Clinic is built has a serious problem of drug abuse and crime. The situation for the Clinic is exacerbated by the fact that 100 meters away from the facility there is a Tavern and a Bottle Store where many altercations emanate from.

MEC Dhlomo asked the local leadership to organize a meeting with the whole community for next week and indicated that he will come with Safety and Liaison MEC, Hon Willies Mchunu to address the general issue of crime that continues to cripple service delivery in the area. He indicated that in that meeting a decision will have to be taken on whether it is the Clinic or Tavern that has to totally shut its doors.

Remarking on the reduced working hours for the clinic and its possible closure, Dr Dhlomo said: "This is a painful decision. But it's in the interests of our workers. We can't sacrifice them at the altar of criminal elements. The people of this community must take a decision that they don't want crime and start protecting both the staff and this healthcare installation. If they fail to do that then they are bound to suffer."



KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo at Ezakheni No.2 Clinic. Dr Dhlomo has endorsed the complete closure of the clinic at night, due to crime in the area. PICTURES by Themba Mngomezulu. For more information, contact Desmond Motha on 083 295 3901.