

KZN Health MEC tells Cuba-bound medical trainees to behave

11 November 2014

KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has urged the 96 medical students departing for Cuba on Thursday to prepare to work hard, behave well and be good ambassadors for South Africa. Dr Dhlomo was addressing the medical students and their parents at a three day orientation programme held at the Royal Hotel in Durban.

KwaZulu-Natal is dispatching yet another group of 96 medical students, most of whom come from poor families in the rural parts of the Province.

Their departure now brings the total number of medical trainees in Cuba to 798, which bears testimony to Government's strong resolve to alleviate the chronic shortage of doctors in the country. By 2019, all these medical students would have returned to the country to begin ploughing back their much-needed skills in their own communities, in outlying areas such as Ceza, Mbongolwane, Ntunjambili and others.

Dr Dhlomo told the students: "The opportunity you've been given is unique and it is for you and you alone. Many others would have liked to be in your shoes. You need to persevere in the first three years because the load is enormous. This journey is like running a marathon. You need to have strong mental ability and tell yourself that the one beside you is equally tired but is still persevering. "I would also like to thank all of you for having worked hard to pass matric without contracting HIV because you cannot study in Cuba if you are HIV-positive."

As a parting shot, Dr Dhlomo said students should go to Cuba knowing they're representing their families and their country, and should see themselves as ambassadors. "They must also support each other as brothers and sisters and get used to working in group discussions."

Dr Dhlomo also provided guidance on the do's and don'ts of life in a strict foreign country like Cuba.

He placed on psychological preparedness, life skills, good behaviour and how to avoid drug and alcohol abuse, pregnancy and other activities leading to misbehaviour. A presentation was also done on the socio-economic conditions in Cuba, its health system and how it compares to the South African one.

One of the parents said: "We are very appreciative of what has been done. The year 2019 is not far. We hope all 96 will come back as doctors. We will keep on praying for them."

The students are undergoing an intense orientation programme presented by expert programme managers.

They will depart for Cuba from the King Shaka International Airport on Thursday, 13 October 2014, at 8am. KwaZulu-Natal Premier Senzo Mchunu and KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo are scheduled to be there to bid them farewell.



Ends

