

## **KZN Health MEC announces stringent security measures at troubled Ezakheni Clinic**

Armed guards, CCTV cameras and a 24 hour ambulance are among a range of stringent security measures announced by KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo at Ezakheni Community Health Centre (CHC) today, in a bid to stem a crime wave which has negatively affected operations at the health facility.

The CHC, which is regarded as a "mini-hospital", provides vital services to the community and is one of the busiest in uThukela District, attending to 25 322 cases per quarter, from a population of 34 097 in places like Ndaka, Steadville, Matiwane, Zakheni, among others.

However, the CHC is situated not far from a tavern. And over a period of time its staff, management and health case users have borne the brunt of a number of adverse incidents perpetrated by unruly elements. These incidents include shootings, stabbings, assaults, damage to property and verbal abuse against the clinic's staff members.

As a result, the MEC took a decision earlier this year to reduce the CHC's working hours; it went from being open 24 a day to operating between 8am and 4pm. This has had far-reaching consequences for members of the local community who need emergency medical attention, including that of a maternal nature.

It has since been discovered that the mortality rate has increased at Ezakheni. This is based on the number of people dying on arrival at the St Chads Community Health Centre, where members of the community are transported to during emergencies, following the the cancellation of night services at the CHC. Baby delivery cases, too, have also increased at St Chads from an average of 30, to more than 60 a month.

However, today, upon reviewing the situation, Dr Dhlomo undertook to meet the request of the Staff, which entail:

- Providing CCTV Cameras for the facility;
- Installing a panick button inside the clinic;
- Increasing armed guards amongst the security;
- Requesting Municipality to ensure that Apollo Lights are working all the time; and
- Requesting Municipality to give an allowance of 10 metres of land so that the fence can be moved away from the guard house at the gate.

Dr Dhlomo and the Staff members agreed that as of January 3, 2015 until end of February, the Clinic will operate a 12 hour shift from 07h00 to 19h00. This to be reviewed at the end February to assess if all the above mentioned requests have been met.

Dr Dhlomo spoke of the crucial "golden hour" in dealing with emergency cases, saying if a person who has been stabbed or shot does not get medical help within the first 60 minutes of their injury, they are bound to bleed to death. The same applies to a pregnant women whose time had come – if they don't get urgent medical assistance, complications may arise.

To mitigate against the above, Dr Dhlomo announced that whilst still working on strengthening the security situation, an Ambulance will be based at the Clinic 24/7. It will be used to respond to all emergencies around the Clinic area and ferry those in need to St Chads and elsewhere.

Transport and Community Safety MEC, Mr Willies Mchunu, who was accompanying Dr Dhlomo, also undertook to ruthlessly deal with criminals and instructed the Police to uproot illegal shebeens and drug dens in the area.

Ends.