

KZN Provincial Drug Masterplan

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For immediate release

The recent report by the World Health Organisation on South Africa's problem of alcohol abuse should hardly make for surprising reading. Evidence that South Africa is afflicted by excessive drinking and substance abuse is in abundance. To confirm this, one only has to look at the statistics of fatalities and people who are injured as a result of adverse traffic-related incidents each year. But the most important question is: what are we doing about it?

The good news is that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health has not waited for the WHO to state what is so patently obvious. Instead, the Department has been proactive, having already drafted its provincial Drug Abuse Master Plan, which is currently being implemented and will run until 2018.

The purpose of this plan is, among other things, to:

- Improve the training of health personnel in the detection, diagnosis and management of patients affected by substance abuse
- Integrate the treatment and management of victims of substance abuse into the primary healthcare system
- Improve the detection rate for alcohol and substance abuse at antenatal clinics and provide the requisite services to reduce the incidence of foetal alcoholic syndrome
- Use counter-advertising to challenge some of the myths propagated by advertisers
- Focus on the dangers of drinking and driving, while promoting healthy lifestyles and road safety
- Encourage parents, teachers and other adults NOT to condone cigarette smoking, the use of alcohol use and/or illicit drugs
- Establish educational programmes for pregnant adolescents, sex workers, homeless and orphaned children and other people who are considered to be at risk
- Institute vigorous multi-media campaigns to educate children and adolescents about substance abuse, including working closely with drug action committees and a roll-out of the Anti-Whoonga Campaign.

It goes without saying that society's involvement in substance and illicit drug abuse usually results in crime, road traffic accidents or those involving pedestrians, as well as injuries due to intoxication. This then does not only compound the burden of disease at our health institutions but also impacts negatively on the budget and the province's economic productivity.

In an attempt to counter this, the KZN Department of Health will be working with people from different spheres of government such as police, Department of Education and Department of Social Development. It will form and consolidate partnerships with the business community, community-based organisations, NGOs, faith-based organisations and labour unions.

The burden of alcohol, tobacco and other drug problems present a major challenge for the province of KwaZulu-Natal and its people. Effective responses from society are required to complement provincial and national programmes on health and social welfare. Failure to address substance abuse-related harm effectively could jeopardise the attainment of positive health status - a vital cog in the reconstruction and development of South Africa. The prevention and combating of substance abuse is the responsibility of every member of society as well as government departments, as designated by the National Drug Master Plan.

ENDS.

ISSUED BY: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, KWAZULU-NATAL

