

KZN Department of Health increases the number of legal termination of pregnancy facilities

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health has increased the number of public health facilities offering safe and legal termination of pregnancy by nearly 300% in just a year.

The number of facilities offering legal termination of pregnancy has gone from 14 to 39 since the beginning of the 2015.

During this period, 19 doctors and 57 professional nurses have received training on medical and surgical termination of pregnancy, as well as value clarification (understanding of the difference between their own personal values vs professional ethos). This training will be ongoing, with the Department focusing more on facilities that are not yet providing termination of pregnancy.

Healthcare professionals who undergo this training are also trained and debriefed on how to deal with social stigma, both in society and in the workplace. The Department is also now contemplating to include Choice on Termination of Pregnancy (CTOP) training in the basic 4 years nursing curriculum.

This information emerged today, when KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, took his anti-illegal abortion campaign to Amajuba District. The MEC led a march through the streets of Newcastle CBD, where he handed over a memorandum to the South African Police Services (SAPS), calling for support and action against the scourge of illegal abortions.

Dr Dhlomo reinforced the message that pregnant mothers need Not turn to unscrupulous backstreet abortion practitioners as the Department provides free termination of pregnancy services to eligible mothers in a healthy and safe environment.

“We always preach the message of abstinence from sex. But for those who cannot abstain, we encourage the use of Dual Protection, which promotes Medical Male Circumcision and the use of female contraceptive methods – while using condoms during every episode of sexual contact. This ensures protection against both sexually transmitted infections - including HIV - and unwanted pregnancies.

“It is actually disappointing that 18 years after the promulgation of The Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act that was introduced in 1996, we still have women being maimed and dying as a result of illegal and unsafe abortions.

“What is alarming is that we see these illegal abortion providers on the street corners distributing the illegal abortion pamphlets.

“We also see these adverts plastered on nearly all the street walls and lamp posts. The adverts are professing ‘safe’, ‘pain free’, ‘quick and cheap’ abortions.

“The proliferation of this advertising, and the fact that it is posted in public spaces such as taxi ranks and shopping centres make many women believe they are accessing a legitimate service, when they are not. In fact, these people who do backstreet abortions are health murderers,” he said.

Statistics show that:

-  In the past Financial Year alone, 12 031 patients were admitted in various health facilities in the Province due to incomplete abortions and 1 455 septic abortions.
-  Also, according to the 2012 Saving Mothers report, in South Africa 186 women died of a septic miscarriage in public health facilities; 23% of which were caused by unsafe or illegal abortions;
-  A study by the South African Medical Research Council in 2010 also showed that 49 % of abortions are undergone by young people between the ages of 13 and 19 years and that these take place outside a hospital or clinic.

The dangers of illegal abortion include:

- Death
- Severe bleeding
- Uterine perforation;
- Tearing of the cervix;
- Severe damage to the genitals and abdomen;
- Internal infection of the abdomen and blood poisoning, and
- Increased risk of infertility.

Dr Dhlomo also warned some health care professionals who pass moral judgement on young people when they seek reproductive health services. This, he said, was a contributing factor to the rate of illegal abortions.

He urged all health care workers to adopt a Youth User-Friendly approach to health care provision.

“We are trying to remind our health care professionals about the importance of upholding professional ethics at all times. This includes creating a conducive environment for everyone who seeks health care, regardless of their age. The Hippocratic Oath and Nurses’ pledge compel doctors and nurses to keep patient information private and confidential at all times. It is very important.”

ENDS

Issued by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health