

MEDIA RELEASE

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## **“Miracle” quadruplets are still in hospital, but doing fine**

The “miracle” quadruplets from Nongoma and their mother have been transferred to the mother-and-child-friendly Lower Umfolozi War Memorial Regional Hospital (LUWMRH) in Empangeni, in northern Zululand, and are in a stable condition.

The smooth and incident-free birth of the four bouncing babies at Benedictine Hospital in Nongoma has been described as a miracle as their mother, Nobuhle Qwabe, admitted she had not attended antenatal classes during her pregnancy. She said she had only found out that she was carrying quadruplets when they were born on Sunday evening. She gave birth naturally.

Yesterday, the mother and her babies were moved from Benedictine Hospital, which is district hospital, to the LUWMR hospital, a specialised facility that is dedicated to the care of obstetrics and neonatal patients.

According to paediatrician Dr Zama Duze, the four babies are in the neonatal ICU ward. They are breathing on their own and have begun feeding on milk squeezed from their mother’s breasts. They will remain in the ward until they gain weight of about 1,5kg each.

Reports from Nongoma are that the arrival of the babies caused a sensation and spectator value at Benedictine Hospital and in the community of Nongoma at large. Yesterday, patients flocked to the maternity ward, wishing to catch a glimpse of the quadruplets and take photographs. The doctor had to intervene and ask that they be given space and privacy.

Congratulatory messages for the doctors and nursing staff who successfully delivered the babies have also been received from as far afield as Pretoria.

“The birth of quadruplets is something unusual and has caused a lot of excitement. We have received a number of calls, including one from a woman in Pretoria, who said she has relatives who live in Nongoma who have a business and want to contribute something towards the quadruplets,” said Ms Nombuyekozo Zulu, Public Relations Officer at Benedictine Hospital.

KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC, Honourable Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, congratulated the team of doctors and nurses from Zululand health district who successfully performed the delivery.

Speaking from the hospital ward yesterday, after giving birth on Sunday night, Ms Qwabe admitted she had not been attending antenatal classes during the run-up to her delivery.

“I honestly didn’t know I was carrying four babies. I was surprised when the nurses told me I was carrying more than one child. I was really not expecting it. But when the doctors arrived, and the babies kept coming, I didn’t know what to say. I was shocked, but I’m excited now.”

Cuba-trained Dr Sibusiso Sithole, who is based at Nkonjeni Hospital some 50km away, said he was called to Benedictine Hospital by the nurses around 19h00 last night, after they realized that Ms Qwabe was carrying more than one baby. He went with Dr Kenneth Mbele, a University of KwaZulu-Natal medical graduate.

Dr Sithole said: “When Dr Mbhele and I arrived in the ward, we examined the mother and discovered

that indeed there might have been one more baby in her. We then helped her deliver the second baby. We were quite surprised to learn that there was a third baby still coming. We then helped her deliver once more. Now, according to our training, triplets are far more common than quadruplets, so it would have been easy to assume that the third baby was the last, and that she had had triplets. But when we checked, we discovered a fourth baby. We were truly, truly surprised."

According to Dr Sithole, the babies weighed between 1kg and 1,3kg. The boy had his own placenta, while the three girls shared theirs.

"We were able to remove both placentas with no problem. All the babies were healthy and there was no bleeding from the mother," he said.

Dr Sithole, who studied medicine at Santa Clara University through the Government's Mandela/Castro Medical Doctor Training Programme, and has been a doctor for eight years, said: "I've delivered many sets of twins before, but I've never done triplets - let alone quadruplets. This has been a real miracle."

Dr Sithole thanked everyone who was involved. "This was not a one man show. I would also like to thank my colleague Dr Mbhele, and the nurses who were involved, and the mother for the co-operation that she showed during the delivery. She gave us no problems."

The babies are being kept in hospital and will be transferred to a higher level healthcare institution for further care.

Ms Qwabe is unemployed and lives with her grandmother and two sisters. She also has a nine year-old daughter.

Asked how she would care for the babies, she said: "I don't know how I'm going to care for the babies, because I only have two hands. I will also need help with baby formula and clothing."

Commenting on this, KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, said: "I would like to congratulate and thank these young doctors who support us in such rural and remote hospitals. A surprise of quadruplets in a district hospital and so well-managed is a miracle. We wish both the mother and babies good life."

The MEC, however, issued an appeal to all pregnant mothers in the province to start ante natal care quite early for optimal care of both mothers and newborns.

"It is a miracle that the mother was able to deliver the quadruplets without incident," Dr Dhlomo said.

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