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## **KZN Health HOD, Dr Sifiso Mtshali and First Lady Bongsi Ngema-Zuma urge the public to get health screening at least once a year in order to beat diabetes and other non-communicable diseases**

THE head of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health, Dr Sifiso Mtshali, has urged the public to get into the habit of getting tested for diseases at least once a year, because early detection makes diseases easier and cheaper to treat or manage.

Dr Mtshali was delivering a speech on behalf of the KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, during the commemoration of World Diabetes Day at Esikhawini Tertiary Vocational Education and Training at the weekend.

The community outreach programme was held in collaboration by the Department of Health, the Bongsi Ngema-Zuma Foundation and the Department of Transport.

Despite the rain, the event, held on Saturday (14 November 2015) drew scores of people and was aerobic exercises, and more the screening and testing of more than 1000 people for diseases.

The prevention and management lifestyle diseases, as well as the importance of promoting health and wellness, remains critical - especially because diabetes is a major contributor to the quadruple burden of Disease facing South Africa (HIV and AIDS and TB; High Maternal and Child Mortality; Non-Communicable Diseases and; Violence and Injuries).

Diabetes has become one of the major causes of deaths in the world, with the majority of people suffering from the disease coming from South Africa.

Dr Mtshali said: "Health is like an investment. The more you invest in it, the longer you will live. And type 2 Diabetes is avoidable. It's a self-made illness. We are urging people to increase exercise and adopt healthy lifestyles, and eat properly.

"TB is the number one killer. If you have diabetes, it affects your immune system. Untreated diabetes makes TB thrive in your body. As a Department, we wish to call upon you to get tested. Our message is, 'Halt the Diabetes epidemic. We are saying be active, decrease your intake of alcohol, and stop smoking."

Dr Mtshali also expressed his appreciation for the partnership that the Department enjoys with the Bongsi-Ngema Zuma Foundation, which was represented at the event by its patron, First Lady Bongsi Ngema-Zuma.

Speaking at the event, the First Lady made a clarion call to all South Africans that it is not too late to change their lifestyles in order to minimize their chances of getting diabetes.

She said the decision to commemorate World Diabetes Day in the Umhlathuze area was that, although this region did not have the highest number of people with diabetes, the rate of mortality due to diabetes was the highest there.

In fact, she said, one of the objectives of the BNZ Foundation was to see a continent where diabetes ceases to be a killer disease due to lack of awareness.

### **SIDE BAR:**

Diabetes (often called sugar diabetes) is a condition where a person has high blood sugar (glucose) level in the body. A person develops diabetes when the body doesn't produce enough insulin. Without insulin, the body cannot get the energy it needs from your food. Normally, a gland called the pancreas makes insulin which carries the sugar in the blood into the cells. In diabetic people, the pancreas fails to supply enough insulin, or the insulin doesn't work properly.

There are two major types of diabetes: Type 1, commonly called juvenile diabetes, and Type 2, commonly called adult on-set diabetes. Both have similar symptoms but very different causes.

Type 1 diabetes, usually diagnosed in childhood, is a disease whereby the body's own immune system attacks and kills the cells in the pancreas which produce insulin, leaving a person's body

without insulin, and unable to regulate its blood sugar levels.

Type 2 diabetes is a disease that results when the body's cells become resistant to insulin. In Type 2 diabetes, unlike in Type 1, insulin is still produced by the body; it just isn't used appropriately.



*First Lady Bongki Ngema-Zuma gets into the swing of things during World Diabetes Day*



*KZN Health HOD, Dr Sifiso Mtshali addressing the audience*



*Some of the people who took part in the aerobic exercises during World Diabetes Day in Esikhawini.*

Photos: Nkosinathi Dlamini (KZN Dept of Health)

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