

Media Release
28 January 2015

Rural communities set to benefit from the 2015 deployment of 171 Therapists and 30 Dentists for Community Service across KZN

KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has welcomed the 2015 group of 171 Therapists that include Physio; Occupational and Speech Therapists as well as the 30 Dentists who will be plying their trade skills in institutions across the Province.

The 201-strong team of recently-qualified medical professionals received orientation and induction at Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital last week, where they were informed on what to expect and how to conduct themselves when serving the people of KwaZulu Natal.

Therapists at the workshop were also told that they would be spending 60% of their time doing community work and spending the remaining 40% of their time working at the hospital level.

“This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) article 26 where it is stated that the provision of rehabilitation should be offered as close as possible to where people live. It also helps at improving accessibility and making health services affordable to our people wherever they are,” Dr Dhlomo explains.

The distribution of the 2015 Community Service Practitioners really favours Hospitals that are in the rural areas as evidenced in the allocation of Therapists for UMkhanyakude District which comes as follows:

Bethesda Hospital; Hlabisa; Manguzi; Mosvold and Mseleni are each receiving:

- 2 Physiotherapists;
- 2 Occupational Therapists
- 1 Audiologist

Additionally, out of the 30 Dentists; 3 are going to be serving at UMkhanyakude District in Manguzi; Hlabisa and Mseleni hospitals. The distribution of other Dentists has also been done in a manner that takes care of other rural hospitals like Christ The King; St Appollinaris; Rietvlei; EG and Usher Memorial, which are all under Harry Gwala District. These services will also spread to other Districts that include Zululand and UThukela.

“With this allocation we are trying by all means to ensure that our patients, who visit healthcare institutions, including those that are in the rural areas get a full package of service in their own areas. “We have also ensured comfort for both the Therapists and Dentists by giving them State Accommodation as well as Rural Allowance as we eventually wish to retain them upon completion of their Community Service,” said Dr Dhlomo.

Community Service was introduced in this country for the Doctors and Dentists in the year 2000 by the then Minister of Health, Dr Nkosazane Zuma and then expanded to cover the Therapists in 2003.

Dhlomo said this has immensely benefitted the rural disadvantaged hospitals and communities who now receive much needed rehabilitation and oral health services closer to their homes, rather than travelling to urban hospitals in PMB and Durban just to be seen for 30 minutes or more; and yet spend a night before the appointment sleeping in hospital benches.

Dr Dhlomo concludes by saying: “The Department of Health KZN prides itself in that it is the only Province that has a Policy for Community Service Officer whereby they spend 60% of their time doing out-reach services at Primary Health Care level, thereby making services accessible to all.”



KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, a qualified medical doctor, inspects a patient's X-Ray image. Dr Dhlomo has expressed his excitement about the 201 newly-qualified medical professionals who are beginning their Community Service, which will bolster the Department's capacity to provide health care services.

ENDS

Issued by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health