

MEDIA RELEASE:
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KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, catches Vryheid hospital staff by surprise

KWAZULU-NATAL Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, has given Vryheid Hospital a clean bill of health, following a surprise visit earlier today.

After arriving unannounced and catching staff, management and patients by surprise, MEC Dhlomo went on to inspect the hospital's maternity ward, post-natal ward, mother's lodge, paediatric ward and the pharmacy.

And the verdict? The MEC is happy with the management upkeep of the hospital, which he found to be clean inside and outside.

"It is actually pleasing to make an unannounced visit to a health facility and find it functioning optimally. Our compatriots have high expectations about the health service delivery in our country. In fact, the National Health Insurance, National Core Standards and Ideal Clinic programmes all envision a working health system.

"So, it is humbling to find people doing the right thing. It bears testimony to what we always say about the importance of doing right, even when nobody is watching," Dr Dhlomo said.

However, the MEC expressed his concern that out of the 18 mothers who gave birth at this hospital on Christmas Day, 4 were aged 17, and another 4 were aged 18.

"It is quite concerning that over 40% of Christmas babies at this hospital were teenage mothers. Teenage pregnancy is not a Department of Health matter. We pick up the consequences of this along the way. It is rather a societal matter that should be taken up by civil society at large, and discouraged."

Dr Dhlomo said the South African government always encourages abstinence from sex for as long as possible – until one is physically and psychologically ready to deal with its consequences.

"For those who cannot abstain from sex, we encourage the use of Dual Protection, which promotes Medical Male Circumcision and the use of condoms during every episode of sexual contact for men; and combining this with the use of female contraceptive methods. This ensures protection against both sexually transmitted infections - including HIV - and unwanted pregnancies."

The KZN Department of Health recently launched the Adolescent and Youth User-Friendly health initiative. The aim of this campaign is to change staff attitudes of certain health workers who tend to judge young people who visit health care facilities to seek reproductive health services.

Dr Dhlomo said he was, nevertheless, happy that Vryheid Hospital has noted the areas where these teenaged mothers are coming. This would assist Government to intervene in these areas through Operation Sukuma Sakhe.

He said it was heart-warming to see that Vryheid Hospital, which serves a deeply rural community, has a functioning mothers' lodge where mothers wait for labour to start within the hospital.

The MEC said the Department of Transport should be commended for continuously building bridges over rivers that previously prevented ambulances from reaching all needy communities.



KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, with nurses from Vryheid Hospital, following his surprise visit

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