

MEDIA ALERT  
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## **Nurses day: KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo hails nurses for advancing the health care service**

“The essential task of rendering an effective and efficient health care service in KwaZulu Natal and elsewhere in the world, largely hinges on the caliber of nursing personnel that serve in our healthcare facilities. I call upon all people of KwaZulu Natal to applaud nurses for the critical role they play in dispensing a health care service,” pronounces Kwa-Zulu Natal Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo.

MEC Dhlomo adds his voice to the plentiful compliments that will be conveyed to all the nurses as the world celebrates International Nurses Day today 12 May 2016. The main focus of this day is on the recognition of the largest group of healthcare professionals who are the backbone of the health system. Nurses are often the generalists in health care, professionals who can work with multiple levels of staff and people who provide a broad range of technical care and coordinate the work of other health care professionals to meet patient goals. The celebration of International Nurses Day is attributed to Florence Nightingale who led the movement of nursing to be recognized as a profession. She was born in Florence, Italy, on May 12 in 1820.

The theme for celebrating International Nurses Day in 2016 is Nurses: A Force for Change: Improving Health Systems' Resilience.

The need for strong and resilient health systems is key to realising the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. On the home front, KwaZulu-Natal has hordes of nurses in all healthcare facilities from the primary healthcare right up to the highest level of healthcare in tertiary institutions.

“Nurses are the first port of call before patients come into contact with other healthcare professionals in our institutions. Theirs is more than just a job but a calling, given the scope of activities they perform. Their job demands special qualities beyond the professional credentials that qualifies them to become nurses” says Dr Dhlomo.

He added that nurses are particularly placed to help communities and are often the most innovative in reaching disadvantaged populations. They are educated to understand the complex nature of maintaining health and wellness, and the impact of psychosocial and socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment and ethnicity. They are trained to see the context for wellbeing and accordingly act in a way to reach beyond the immediate presenting problems.

The task of ensuring optimal health for the people of KwaZulu Natal demands continuous capacity building programmes for nurses in various disciplines. The Department continues to

uplift the skills of nursing profession through the provincial College of Nursing. The main aim is to produce a healthcare workforce that caters for the health care needs of the people of KwaZulu Natal.

A total of 1 892 Nurses graduated across all categories in October 2015. As an addition to the human resources pool, the college also placed 396 Community Service Nurses and 188 Service Obligation Professional Nurses to provide services. The support of the roll out of NHI in KwaZulu Natal have also seen the Department partner with the University of KwaZulu Natal in training 50 Primary Health Care Nurses in 2015 while 170 more are expected to complete their training just next month.

The central role of nurses will again be highlighted when KwaZulu Natal shares with the world successes of its Nurse Initiated and Managed Antiretroviral Treatment Programme (NIMART), during the International Aids Conference in July. The NIMART programme is the province's latest stride on the administration of Antiretroviral treatment, a programme which mainly used to be doctor driven but now encompasses trained nurses. Since 210 the Department has a total of 1578 nurses trained on NIMART as well as 150 trained as mentors. These nurses now complement 155 doctors that have completed the Diploma in HIV and AIDS Management. This programme has already begun to yield the desired fruits for the province. Because of the trained nurse personnel, almost 75% of patients on Antiretroviral Treatment Programme are managed at Primary Healthcare level by our nurses. To this end, the province has achieved to put 1 million patients on the ART programme.

With these positive stories, the Department takes pride in celebrating this day with all Nurses in the province, the country and the entire global village.

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