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Improved healthcare for KZN's prison inmates on chronic medication

NEARLY 4000 inmates on chronic medication throughout KwaZulu-Natal's 41 correctional facilities will benefit tremendously from the new Chronic Medicine Dispensing and Distribution (CCMDD) programme launched in Durban.

This includes inmates who are on medication for chronic ailments such as diabetes, asthma, cancer, HIV and others.

Speaking at the launch, at the Westville Corrections Centre



today (16 December 2016), KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo said the programme holds major gains for government's quest to ensure, among others, maximum access to Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART) – especially for inmates who are not on treatment. The Department of Correctional Services (DCS) has 41 Correctional Centres across the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. These Correctional Centres have 7 471 known HIV positive offenders, of whom 3 855 are on Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART). The CCMDD programme will help enrol the remaining nearly 4000 HIV-positive inmates on ART. MEC Dhlomo said that under the new CCMDD programme, pharmacies situated at correctional facilities in Pietermaritzburg and Durban will coordinate the collation of prescriptions from various correctional facilities in the province and submit those prescriptions to the service provider.

Unlike in the past, ART and other chronic medication will now be delivered seamlessly by a service provider to respective correctional facilities, closer to the inmates.

“The new CCMDD system means better co-ordination of the dispensing and distribution process. This programme is ideal because the inmates are confined; and there is minimal risk of non-adherence and loss to follow-up as the offenders are confined under the care of the professional staff of the Department of Correctional Services. It will also lead to the eradication of stigma, since the medication is contained in similar packaging.”



MEC Dhlomo added that the initiative will benefit not only the inmates, but broader society as well.

“The vast majority of people committed to prison eventually return to the wider society. Therefore any diseases contracted in prison, or any medical conditions made worse by conditions of confinement, become issues of public health for

the wider community when people are released.

“Therefore, reducing the transmission of HIV in prisons is an important step in reducing the spread of infection in broader society.

“We are looking forward to rolling out this campaign throughout the province, in order to ensure that we fulfil our noble mandate, the attainment of a long and healthy life for all South Africans.

“Government has already done a lot to improve access to Anti-Retroviral Treatment in the province. As you may remember, on 01 September 2016, we started a programme of giving out Anti-Retroviral Treatment to all patients testing HIV positive. This is the new policy in line with the World Health Organization's guidelines that the urgent commencement of treatment for people who are HIV positive – regardless of their CD4 Count - is extremely beneficial.”

ENDS

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