

MEDIA RELEASE

18 JULY 2016

National Health Minister, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, makes a call for the eradication of stigma on tuberculosis

A National Coalition against TB was launched in Durban, KwaZulu Natal, yesterday (18 July 2016), a day ahead of the official opening of the 21st International Aids Conference from today until Friday. This Coalition is a Partnership between Government is led by the National Department of Health, which has partnered with the National Religious Association for Social Development (NASRAD), the South African National TB Association (SANTA) and the South Africa Red Cross.

According to the National Minister of Health Dr Aron Motsoaledi, TB has overtaken AIDS as the biggest killer out of all infectious diseases. Today TB is responsible for more deaths than HIV and AIDS in the whole world.

The launch yesterday, at a packed church service at EThekwini Community Church in Durban, was led by the National Minister of Health Dr Aron Motsoaledi together with KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo and a host of health professionals including members of parliament from African States. They all signed a pledge to be part of the global TB Caucus. Sounding a warning about the dangers of this silent killer, Minister Motsoaledi said: "I dare all of you to request nurses to screen you for TB when you visit our clinics.

Whether you are there for immunisation of your child or treatment of any other ailment, please ask to be screened so that you can know whether or not you need to be put on treatment for TB."

Government is going to scale up TB screening in all Metros hence the launch in EThekwini, which is said to have the highest concentration of TB patients in the whole country.

The minister said that facts about TB seem not to be known and yet it's the biggest problem we need to worry about more than AIDS. He said that TB was one of the biggest killers of people who have AIDS. Statistics reveal that 9 million people are suffering from TB in the whole world but only 6 million are on treatment. In South Africa, the people who are highly affected by TB are Miners, Inmates, people in Informal Settlements and children - especially those aged under 5.

The poor socio-economic conditions that prevail in some communities, especially poor household ventilation and food insufficiency, provide a breeding ground for diseases such as TB, with children being particularly vulnerable.

Minister Motsoaledi called upon Churches, mosques, synagogues and other places of worship to help save lives.

"Today, we again summon the nation, communities, religious groups, men, women and the youth to participate in this ground-breaking TB testing campaign. As we do so, we must remind one another that to have tuberculosis is not a shame.

We must allay the fears of those who contract the disease that they will be shunned, excluded and made to suffer in silence away from everybody else. We must stand firm against prejudice, stigma and exclusion.”

South Africans have been asked to reduce the likelihood of infection by doing simple things such as covering the mouth when coughing.

Some of the symptoms of TB include:

- Coughing for two weeks or more,
- Persistent fever for more than two weeks,
- Inexplicable weight loss, drenching sweats and fatigue.

“TB can affect any part of the body, if you see that there is something amiss in your body, maybe you’re losing too much weight or sweating too much, you must suspect that you’re having TB ” warned the Minister.

ENDS

Issued by the Office of the MEC of the KZN Department of Health