

22 October 2016

## **March raising awareness on Albinism in KZN**

MEC Dhlomo participated in the march organized by the Provincial with wing of the Albinism Society of South Africa (ASSA) that began at King Dinuzulu (Berea) Rd and proceeded along Dr Pixley ka Isaka Seme (West) Street all the way to the Durban City Hall.

The objective here was to create awareness about the multiple forms of discrimination, stigma and personal safety challenges that people living with Albinism face; all having something to do with dangerous social myths and misconceptions that people have.

MEC Dhlomo, on behalf of the KwaZulu Natal Government apologised to all the compatriots living with Albinism for the discriminatory treatment they are subjected to in the land of their birth, saying:

‘The superstition and stigma associated with albinism continues to leave those with the condition feeling unsafe; isolated and excluded.’

The event which saw hundreds of people with Albinism from all corners of the Province was also used to commemorate October as the Skin Cancer Month. People with Albinism are more vulnerable to skin cancer than another other group.

Chairperson of Albinism Society in KZN, Mr Bhekisisa Thabethe thanked the MEC for participating and also acknowledged the support and assistance people with Albinism are receiving in King Edward and Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospitals. In these institutions, he says if a person with Albinism visits the hospital for any health condition, he or she is further given forms with details of the Albinism Society as per working arrangement made with the Department;

‘This on its own continues to assist us in creating a data base of all the persons with Albinism in the Province.’

In appealing for more assistance, Thabethe explained that NIVEA SA is supplying them with Sun Screen but that they have challenges in transporting the product to far away Districts like Amajuba; UMkhanyakude and Zululand. MEC Dhlomo reported that almost daily the Department through its Planned Patient Transport arrangements ferries patients and medical sundries to those areas and that the same transport will be used to assist in bringing in the Sun Screen products.

MEC Dhlomo also informed the assembled that KZN now has McCord Hospital as the Eye Care Centre of Excellence and that since people with Albinism are susceptible to eye sight problems, they should visit clinics that will refer them to McCord.

In this forum, the Chairperson of Albinism Society in KZN also explained that that any one of us – or our children - could be born with Albinism and that Albinism is an inherited condition where a person is unable to produce normal colouring of the skin, hair and eyes (lack of pigments). He further said people who have normal pigmentation could be carriers of the hereditary material that is defective for skin colour. He thus opened the membership of his organisation to all and MEC Dhlomo enlisted saying any of his relatives or even his own

children can bring to the world a person with Albinism.

ENDS



*The MEC for Health in Kwazulu-Natal Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo with Bhekisisa Thabethe at The City Hall in Durban during Albinism Awareness Campaign*



*The MEC for Health in Kwazulu-Natal Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo with Mr Bhekisisa Thabethe and his family during the Albinism Awareness Campaign at the City Hall in Durban 22 October 2016*

Pictures by Themba Mngomezulu